

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

Newsletter of the

First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

Pastor Amy Brooks

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Office phone: 618-462-2462

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www.firstuualton.org



Congregation established 1836



Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. February 2020 Theme: "Courage"

February 2nd

Presented by Tracey Howe-Koch

Worship Associate: Peg Flach

Potluck Lunch at 11:15 a.m.

Seekers II group discussion at 11:15 a.m.

February 9th

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: John Herndon

RE class meets at 10 a.m.

Yoga at 11:15 a.m.

February 16th

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: Jerry Johnson

Congregational meeting at 11:15 a.m.

February 23rd

Presented by: Sayer Johnson

Worship Associate: Robyn Berkley

Please join local Transgender activist and organizer Sayer Johnson as he speaks on the topic of "Courage." Sayer will reflect on his work and identity and how courage has presented within his beloved trans expansive community.

2/23/2020 continued

There will be a special musical guest, Oliver Pashea. Oliver Pashea is a queer, non-binary singer/songwriter. They take inspiration from their daily life and infuse those inspirations into their music. They enjoy trying different genres, but mostly fall into the acoustic variety via keyboard or guitar.

RE class meets at 10 a.m.

Yoga at 11:15 a.m.

In case of Church cancellation due to weather, watch for an email from Lee or Char and / or watch for an announcement that will scroll across Channel 5 - KSDK.

**MARK CALENDARS NOW FOR AN IMPORTANT
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 16, 2020**

Next Newsletter Deadline – February 20

**Open Letter to the members of the
First Unitarian Church of Alton
FROM: Lee Suarez, Board President**

Dear Congregation, on February 16th two official votes from the Congregation will be held. The first vote is approval to develop two Task Forces which would run concurrently. One Task Force would develop a Strategic Plan called “Heritage” and the other Task Force would develop a Strategic Plan called “Horizon.” The Second vote, is to approve the slate of church members who have agreed to place their names in nomination to be on one of the two Task Forces. At that time, we will also take nominations from the floor.

On September 13th I sent you a message that we needed to finish a conversation that started in 2011. I stated that the economy, and changing dynamics of church attendance are all factors in needing to have these open Congregational Town Hall discussions. The old methods are not sustainable, and WE must look to our future. There have been many questions that needed to be asked and answered, to get us to where we are now, and more than likely, many more to ask and answer. We must continue to come together to find a viable and creative solution. Part of this process or journey we have been on, is facing our priorities. Is our priority to maintain an historical building? Or is our priority to act on our mission? **Our Mission: Outward Reaching, Inward Seeking. We are creating and nurturing an intentional community that values social justice, acceptance and the embodiment of UU principles. Let us question together.**

Both choices have benefits as well as issues. Have we waited long enough? Can we become a change agent in these critical times?

On February 16th once it is approved to establish the two Task Forces of five members each, a vote will be taken to approve the slate of 10 individuals who have agreed to serve on the Task Forces. The Board President will Chair these two Task Forces. **June 1st** is the deadline for the Task Forces to develop their Strategic plans. These Strategic plans or proposals will be presented to the congregation on June 7th.

First and foremost, the Task Forces will be expected to present proposals that will include a set of well-vetted goals, initiatives and budgets along with recommended action steps to achieve each goal. **The resulting strategic plan from each Task Force will result in a budget proposal which will go to the Congregation for approval on June 7th.** The intent is that the approved Strategic plan and proposed budget is a Call to Action to achieve the desired outcome.

Below are excerpts from Rev. Amy’s message to the congregation on Jan 5th, 2020. These are a few of the issues that the Task Forces will need to address.

“Here is the challenge for Heritage:

The group who researched this option identified ensuring accessible entry to the building as the most important need. Unfortunately, they were not able to hit upon a solution to that problem. So, the work of choosing Heritage includes,

- Finding a way to fund a quarter to a half million-dollar capital works campaign for an elevator.
- Working with the City of Alton to improve the accessibility of the sidewalks and stairs leading into the building.
- Finding a solution to the absence of parking spaces – accessible and otherwise.
- OR, if those three tasks cannot be accomplished, finding a way to reconcile our desire to welcome All people with our inability to do so.
- Also, the work of embracing heritage involves locating additional funding to do the repairs needed to maintain this lovely, historic space.

“Here is the challenge for Horizon:

The group who researched this option identified the desire to retain the wholeness of this community – with its support, inspiration, and sense of connection – as being the most important need by a large margin. So, the work of choosing Horizon includes,

- Doing the logistical work of meeting with realtors to assess the value of this property; and to investigate other options for sale or lease.
- Investigating whether the operational expenses at another location will be lower than those we face here.
- Meeting with other UU Congregations who have done this work to gain from their learned wisdom; and with congregations from other faith traditions to talk through the option of sharing space with a view to decreasing operational expenses.
- Ensuring that the work of 4th Saturday can continue – either through the wise choice of a new location, or by arranging to share space with a business or non-profit in this area.
- Working together to discover how we can retain, or carry with us, some of the meaning that this space has provided for us.”

As members of this Congregation, we need to face our own hearts. We started this adventure at our First Town Hall meeting with focusing on what we loved about our community and the memories are what builds our community. Whatever that means to each one of us is what is in our hearts that we hold to, and is it more than a building? And it may not be. (Our building is beautiful and needs TLC.) Or, is it what we share with each other on our own spiritual path? WE can do this as long as we stay together and work together as a committed community.

New Church Keys

I want to let everyone know that we are re-keying all of the exterior doors. If you currently have a key to the church please bring it to church and return it to me. After January 23rd your old key will no longer work to enter the Church. On January 26th we will re-issue keys to anyone who needs a key.



This project is part of the Board's plan for safety and security in our church. We are also checking on the expiration dates of our fire extinguishers and mapping our exit locations.

If you have questions or concerns please get in touch with me.

Lee Suarez, Board President

Social Activities

(Photo of the Unitarian church which Anna D. Sparks attended, built in 1855. It was torn down and replaced in 1905 with our current church. The parsonage was added in the 1870s or 80s. The tree in the front is still here today.)



Anna Ds Lunch Gathering Thursday, February 6th - 11:30 a.m.

The February meeting should be our last at The Best (Chinese)

Buffet in Wood River (It is in a strip mall across from Wood River Wal-Mart. The address is 615 Wesley Drive.) We go there during the deep of winter, knowing that bad weather that might keep us away won't affect their staff and food planning if we don't show. (If you need detailed information about the location, let Sandy Shaner know at wrgma2@gmail.com or 618-254-9040.) While we don't focus on a reservation or RSVP, it's nice if you let Sandy know if you're coming so she can ask them to set up one or more tables. At this next meeting we can talk about where we might like to go as spring approaches.

Anna Ds to be Featured at the Women's History Coalition – March 7, 2020

The Eva A. McDonald Women's History Coalition was founded 37 years ago by Eva A. McDonald and Sibyl Bellis. The Coalition represents over 17 women's community organizations. It is the largest diversified and multicultural group in Madison County. Each year in March the coalition sponsors a breakfast to recognize the contributions women have made in our local communities, the country, and the world. The breakfast gives women of all races, ages, and religions an opportunity to network and become more informed on gender issues. Each year one of the 17 member organizations is highlighted. The Anna Ds will be the featured group at this year's event on Saturday, March 7, at the Best Western Premier in Alton. The Anna Ds will provide table decorations and a presentation on the history of the group. Contact Jen Politsch at politschw@aol.com for ticket information.



Men's Monthly Lunch Thursday, February 13th - 11:30 a.m.

The men's Lunch Bunch meets on the second Thursday of each month. Join us at the Best (Chinese) Buffet, 615 Wesley Dr. in Wood River. All men in

our church are invited. For further information contact **Paul Hebert** pphebert@mail.com.

Saturday, February 15th 7 p.m.

Tonight we will celebrate 100 years since the "Roaring 20s" with a speakeasy of our own in the Kate Wuerker Room.



Bring a snack to share and your own (now legal) beverage of choice.

Dress in your best 20s attire (1920 or 2020) and come prepare to listen and / or dance to some hot jazz.

Say the "secret word" to be admitted ("UU Fun").



SEEKERS II Discussion Group

Some people have wanted to restart the Seekers Discussion Group. The first meeting will be on February 2nd. Since this is potluck

Sunday, those interested in participating in the Seekers should get their lunch and meet in Emerson Place around 11:15 a.m. The group will work out a future meeting schedule at that time.



RE NEWS

Our Children & Youth continue on their *Faithful Journeys* path as they learn about our 7 Principles, and putting their faith into action. At the beginning of January, they focused on the second Principle; justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. They heard a story about an African-American Unitarian, Fannie Barrier Williams, who was active in the club movement and created clubs for African-American women. The children & youth discussed what it meant to belong, and how it feels to be excluded, and explored how organizing a group to fight injustice can be effective.

This prompted the group to decide on doing a service project within the next coming months. They decided that they want to provide Easter Baskets for the children of the families who come to our 4th Saturday Distribution program at the end of March. In order to do that, they need to raise some money to purchase their supplies.

On March 1st, instead of having a Potluck, the children/ youth plan to host a Fundraiser Spaghetti Dinner, asking for \$5.00 per person. They will provide pasta (as well as gluten free), salad, and bread, as well as clean up. They ask church members who want to, to bring desserts to share for that day. Please come and support our Children & Youth of this congregation.

At the end of January, their Faithful Journey continued as they focused on the Third Principle,

acceptance of one another and spiritual growth, as they heard about a Pagan Unitarian Universalist girl who celebrated the harvest holiday, Lammas, at a peace rally. During the celebration, she finds the courage to take the stage and lend her voice to the gathering. Participants learn a concept of "magic" based on focusing one's energy on purposeful, positive action to change the world in a positive way.

On February 9th, just before Valentine's Day, our Children/ Youth will learn about the fifth Principle, the right of conscience and the use of democratic process. Participants will learn about our Association's leadership role in contemporary justice issues and the impact Unitarian Universalist children and adults had when they sent thousands of handmade valentines to California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to promote marriage equality. The group will choose an issue they are concerned about and give voice to their convictions in writing and sending postcards or a petition to congregational leaders or government lawmakers.

Our faith not only allows, but also supports us to question, to seek answers, and to reevaluate our answers by posing new questions. On February 23rd our Children & Youth will explore our fourth Unitarian Universalist Principle, a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. This session draws particularly on our fifth Source, humanist teachings that counsel us to heed the guidance of reason, and the results of science. We demonstrate that the search for truth and meaning is an ongoing quest. The children learn about Clyde Tombaugh, the Unitarian Universalist man who discovered Pluto, and the decision in 2006 to change Pluto's status from planet to dwarf planet. The children will experience the relative scale of the planets in an activity with modeling dough.

There will be more to come next month about our Children & Youth's Faithful Journey along the path to learn about our Unitarian Universalist Principles, and how to live and put their faith into action.

**Joy Hoefft,
RE Committee Chair**

4th Saturday Distribution 2/22/2020

This monthly distribution of personal care and household care items is the church's major community service outreach program. We have noticed that we are not getting as many product donations as we did at one time. Please watch for announcements of what products are needed and bring your donations to church. Your assistance is also needed on distribution day to work with the distribution and the hospitality efforts. Financial support is also always appreciated.

**Looking Ahead – Save the Dates!
Future Social and Fundraising
Activities - More Details as the Dates
Get Closer**



Sunday March 1st:
There will be a RE sponsored Fundraising (\$5.00 per person) spaghetti lunch in place of our regular

potluck lunch. This is a fundraiser organized by the RE class to help provide toys and treats for children who come, or whose parents come, to our 4th Saturday distribution in March. Coordinated by the kids and Robyn Berkley.

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Saturday March 14th: Our second (not annual) P.J. Party. Relax and wear your nightwear or comfy clothes for an evening of fun.

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Sunday, April 5th: We will be hosting a combo social and fundraising event on **Sunday, April 5**. Please join us for a Sunday Concert featuring the Troubadours of Divine Bliss. Please DO invite your friends and family! Tentatively set for 6:00-8:00 p.m., we will be serving light refreshments and

drinks. Here are some links to this delightful group.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uc2rpJxme2Q>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCZdTbxwSxs>.

Contact Peg Flach to volunteer to help with refreshments and other hosting needs.

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Saturday, April 18th: An Open Mic Coffee House. Anyone is welcome to sing, play an instrument, read a poem, dance, rant or whatever you want to share. Coffee, tea, and desserts will be served.

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Saturday, May 16th: A 60's Night in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Woodstock. Wear your 60's outfit and enjoy music and 60's trivia. Bring snacks to share.

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Sunday, June 14th: We will once again be assisting the Edwardsville Moose Lodge with their bi-monthly community chicken dinner. The last time we did this, it proved to be a fun quickly-over-and-done **FUNDRAISER** and social event! Volunteers will be needed to help with meal prep/cleanup and bake sale goods. More details to follow! Contact Peg Flach to volunteer to help.



**Summary of the Church
Board Meeting of 1/9/2020
Sandy Shaner, Secretary**

How much do your Board members like each other? Enough to meet and meet and meet? It looks that way when you scan my most recent Minutes from the January 9th meeting (which will be posted once they're approved in February). We did more than just plan more meetings, but we wanted to let you know about upcoming meetings in case any spur your curiosity.

Next Board meeting – will be held on 2/4/2020 at 6 in either the Wuerker Room or Emerson Room (depending on which is warmer).

Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting – will be held after the service on 2/16/20. As always, a notice, agenda and related materials will be sent to all members in advance. But we want you to mark your calendars NOW and note that we will have child care for those desiring it from 9:45-12:30 that Sunday.

Date for minister's semi-annual review – a small working group (Lee, Phil and Sandy) will meet with Amy 1/29 at 11 a.m. at Church.

DENOMINATIONAL EVENTS

**News from the MidAmerica Region, Eliot
Chapel Women's Weekend, and the UUA**

**SAVE THE DATE FOR
REGIONAL ASSEMBLY 2020**

Regional Assembly 2020 will be held at **The Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockford, Illinois on Saturday, April 18, 2020**. Our keynote speaker will be Taquiena

Boston, Special Advisor to the UUA President for Institutional Inclusion, Equity, and Change. The day will feature worship, the annual business meeting, lunch, keynote presentation, and select workshops. The annual business meeting and keynote speaker will be live streamed for those who cannot attend. On Friday evening, April 17, The UU Church in Rockford will graciously host an evening gathering for those in town. Go to <https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ra/2020> to learn more or register.



Save the Date!

**Eliot Chapel
Women's Weekend** is
May 15th -17th .

Options are to participate in just the Saturday activities ... or the whole weekend. Check the website, details will be posted soon!

<http://www.eliotwomensweekend.com/>

General Assembly 2020 - Register Now



General Assembly is the annual gathering of Unitarian Universalists, where we conduct business of the Association, explore the theological underpinnings of our faith, and lean fully into our mission and principles. Please join us Wednesday, June 24th through Sunday, June 28th, 2020 in Providence, Rhode Island for this 5-day immersive experience where we participate in inspirational worship services and informative workshops, reconvene with friends and colleagues, and explore our bustling exhibit hall. GA is an unforgettable experience for the thousands of UUs who attend. Meet us in Providence and you'll leave with renewed energy and innovative ideas to share with your congregation and community-at-large!

For more information or to REGISTER go to <https://www.uua.org/ga>

CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of February 2020

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 Hoefl
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.

Unitarian Universalism History and Heritage



Here at Harvard Square Library, we believe that the more you get to the radical root of the matter, the more possibilities emerge. That's why we are committed to presenting digital materials related to

Unitarian Universalism and its heritage in usable formats for edification, research, and enjoyment, all free of charge. This season be sure to check out our popular special feature on the ["Unitarian Invention of Christmas"](#) as well as our anthology booklet of historic Unitarian Christmas stories, available either [in paperback, or in kindle format](#). And we hope you might be interested in accepting a gift: [code that will allow you to add to your personal, organizational or congregational website a feed called "This Day in Unitarian Universalist History."](#) This season is also a great time to check out some of our special features. Our most recent addition is a living, growing document, ["A Timeline of Unitarian Universalists Relationships with Native American Peoples and Nations,"](#) which responds to the many calls from our Unitarian Universalist Association to explore our past in relationship to white supremacy. This, like

so many of our materials and features, reflects our interests in serving the current mission of Unitarian Universalism through a serious engagement with our history and identity. Don't miss some of our other new materials and features (all accessible at <https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/special-features/>)

- "A History of Death: UU Style" (complete with gravestone morph video animation)
- "What the Universalists Talked about When They Talked about Love: A Valentine's Day Special"
- "Longest Running Soap Opera Ever Inspired by Unitarian Minister"
- "Unitarian Minister invented Bibliotherapy: Books to Prescribe for the Human Condition"

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Sincerely,

Dr. Susan Ritchie, Executive Director, Harvard Square Library