

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

Newsletter of the

First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

Pastor Amy Brooks

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Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m.

March 2020 Theme: "Freedom and Responsibility"

March 1st

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: Robyn Berkley

Spaghetti Lunch RE Fundraiser at 11:15 a.m.

March 8th

"Shiny Things"

Presented by Dennis Fisher

Humans seem to chase after shiny things that catch their eye. Considering the nature of the shiny things we chase is the topic of today's sermon.

Worship Associate: Peg Flach

RE class meets at 10 a.m.

Yoga at 11:15 a.m.

March 15th

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: Tracey Howe-Koch

March 22nd

"Trusting Conscience" – A Faith Rocket sermon

Presented by Jerry Johnson

Worship Associate: John Herndon

RE class meets at 10 a.m.

February 2020

March 29th

Presented by Tracey Howe-Koch

Please join us as the woodwind quintet **No Strings Attached** leads us on a spiritual journey through music. Music has the power to convey feelings that words can not always express. It can heal and bring us closer together as a community. We look forward to seeing you there.

Yoga at 11:15 a.m.

Board Meeting – Tuesday, March 10th 6:00 p.m.



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.

A Summary of the Comments of Board President Lee Suarez at the Semi-Annual Church Membership Meeting on February 16, 2020

On June 9th, 2019 I stood before you and expressed my optimism for the upcoming year with excitement and enthusiasm. I didn't know there was going to be so much excitement!

I expressed my Goals to you so that you would know I was going to work for you with some direction that I had heard from different Congregational members. These Goals were: to have **Open Avenues of Communication**, and to **Encourage Transparency** with Quarterly Financial reports and results. I wish we could have done that, but with the circumstances as they developed this could not happen. I am encouraged that for the last part of the year we will give you a better financial picture.

I would like to share with you some of the accomplishments that have occurred.

- The church website and social media sites are being maintained and updated regularly.
- Open discussions are taking place about our building and where we should house our activities.
- Committee positions are being filled.
- The RE program has been revitalized.
- Two teenagers now serve on the church Board to represent our youth.
- The Social Justice Committee has been reactivated.
- Landscaping work by our church members has helped beautify our grounds and those members who are involved in the ongoing work of building maintenance (repairing, fixing, improving) deserve much thanks.
- The Worship Committee members along with our ushers, accompanist and sound tech continue to play crucial roles in Sunday services.
- The 4th Saturday Distribution program continues to serve those in need in our wider community.
- We have increased the security of our building by changing the exterior locks,

something that had not been done for many years.

- We have hired a Certified Public Accountant to perform financial tasks.

Today (2/16/2020) we will be electing members to serve on two Task Forces to run concurrently. One Task Force will develop a Strategic Plan called "Heritage" and the other will develop a Plan for "Horizons." I will Chair both of those Task Forces. A final vote on our future direction will take place in June when each Task Force makes its final report.

I would like to close our meeting with –
WE are the Board, ALL OF US, we govern our direction collectively, each one of us has a role to play. We need each and every one of you. **It takes all of US to Love and Care for this Church. Come help us move forward, and together we can do this.**



RE NEWS

Our Children & Youth continue on their *Faithful Journeys* path as they learn about our 7 Principles, and putting their faith into action.

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.

RE classes in March will be on March 8th (theme "Seek Truth" and March 22nd (theme "Speak Out").

**Joy Hoeft,
RE Committee Chair**

Social Activities

Anna Ds Lunch Gathering Thursday, March 5th - 11:30 a.m.

With the promise of spring, we begin our traveling lunches again on March 5th. Since the threat of snow prevented our February meeting, we hadn't discussed where to go in March ... so Mary Weber and I just decided to return to **Bella Milano**: 1063 South State Route 157 Edwardsville, IL 62025. **Phone:** (618) 659-2100 Edwardsville.

We've been there many times and enjoyed every visit. If you need an address or directions, let me know. I have a medical appointment I can't rearrange, so Mary Weber is making the arrangements for us and "hosting." You can either call Mary W. to RSVP or respond to this email and I can let her know who plans to attend.

And don't forget the March 7th Women's History Coalition Breakfast. For more information or to reserve a ticket, let Jen Politsch or Pat Moore know of your interest.



Men's Monthly Lunch Thursday, March 12th 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.

Pajama Party Saturday, March 14th at 7:00 p.m.



Join us on Saturday, March 14th at 7:00 pm for a relaxing night of fun, with music, conversation, snacks, and a movie for the kids. This will be a "Pajama Party." so wear your PJs, robe, or whatever makes you comfy. Bring a bedtime snack to share.

This is a party for the whole family, and friends are welcome to join us also. If the kids come in their PJ's, they can watch a Disney movie together and they'll be ready for bed when they get home and brush their teeth.

Mark your calendar now for this March 14th event, and also for our last two social events of the church year, an Open Mic Night on April 18th and a 60s' Woodstock Celebration on May 16th.

Pat Moore and the Social Activities Committee



THREE ITEMS FROM OUR SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM

John Herndon and Ed Navarre – Co-Chairs

Announcement from the Rev. Scott Aaseng, of the UUANI (UU Advocacy Network of Illinois)

*** SAVE - THE - DATE ***

*The truth about stories is, that's all we are. –
Thomas King*

Imagine... listening to the stories of your neighbors, listening for who they are and how they came to be. Imagine sharing your own story and being heard. What would it be like to live in that world? How might this change your world? [Studies](#) have shown that sharing stories is the most effective way to make meaningful differences in people's attitudes. Come and learn how to tell your story to become effective advocates for seeing our UU values reflected in our candidates and legislation. Plan to attend the UUANI "VoteLove" all-day workshop with Olivia Chow the day before the MidAmerica Assembly.

April 17th || 10 am - 4 pm

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford
4848 Turner St, Rockford, IL 61107

[SIGN UP HERE.](#)

[Olivia Chow](#), established the [Institute for Change Leaders \(ICL\)](#), will join us for a day [Deep Canvassing](#) training. This education will be available to anyone in the region. Deep canvassing is about having door-to-

door, one-on-one conversations with people in your community about the issues that matter to you. This concept embodies the spirit of Vote Love and makes possible the opportunities that transform our relationships and communities. During this one-day seminar with lead trainer Olivia Chow, you will:

- Develop skills to tell your story and motivate others
- Learn and practice deep canvassing to move voters

The curriculum is based on the teachings of Harvard University Professor Marshall Ganz, an advisor to President Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign and veteran of SNCC and United Farm Worker campaigns.



The 2020 election will be pivotal to the welfare of our nation, and we as people of Faith and Values must prepare and educate. Our church is preparing to do our part to educate and

to participate. To learn more go to:
<https://www.uua.org/justice/vote2020>

Statement from the Social Justice Co-Chairs

Recent policies that have been handed down by some local religious leaders that affect transgender persons, we believe is not only hurtful and dangerous but are immoral and un-just. To deny a person their expression of the true nature of their being is contrary to basic human rights and values. Children are the human persons being targeted by a policy of exclusion and denial of their rights of expression. This policy can only be seen as a form of spiritual violence and is an anathema to the central core values of what we as Unitarian Universalists value, as not only faith, but also basic human freedom and dignity. Policies of exclusion and conformity are also contrary to what modern science and good medical practice dictate, and as such must be seen as not only abnormal but must be resisted and fought against at every turn. We refuse to stand by and let so called “religious leaders” bring harm and abuse to an already vulnerable group of children. WE RESIST!

Financial Support – 4th Saturday Distribution

We are discussing the possibility asking for financial support from members and friends (several of you already donate money regularly) rather than asking for product donations. We are thinking about ordering most of the requested products online in bulk from various sources like Dollar Tree, Amazon, etc. We hope to try this idea out for the March distribution. If you make a financial contribution, please make your check out to First Unitarian Church with 4th Saturday Distribution on the memo line, or if donating cash, put it in an envelope with your name and 4th Saturday donation written on it. All contributions marked for 4th Saturday will be added to your donation statement at the end of the year.

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

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.

DENOMINATIONAL EVENTS

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY 2020

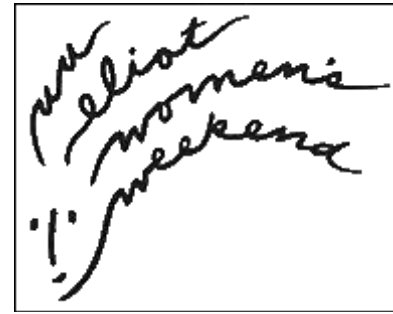
Regional Assembly 2020 will be held at **The Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockford, Illinois on Saturday, April 18, 2020.** Our keynote speaker will be Taquiena Boston, Special Advisor to the UUA President for Institutional Inclusion, Equity, and Change. The day will feature worship, the annual business 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.

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>



Save the Date!
Eliot Chapel Women's Weekend
May 15-17, 2020

Toddhall Retreat Center in Columbia IL

The retreat is offered for Women of Eliot Chapel and for women from Unitarian churches in the surrounding area.

Make Time for Yourself and Renew Your Energy!

Stay 1 night, 2 nights or come Saturday only.

Join us for a time of relaxation, rejuvenation, and illuminating workshops to feed the mind, body, and spirit.

Toddhall Retreat Center is 30 minutes from Kirkwood, 38 minutes from St. Charles, 48 minutes from Alton.

Appreciate the beauty of nature, join in a spiritual community, and enjoy the on-site Sunday morning service.

Activities include workshops, Scholarship Silent Auction, BYOB wine tasting, massage, crafts, bonfire and songs, great food and camaraderie

REGISTRATION BEGINS MARCH 15th. Updated information at www.eliotwomensweekend.com The 2019 fees were as follows:

Description	Fee
Fri, Sat & Sun (single, 4 meals)	\$175
Fri, Sat & Sun (double, 4 meals)	\$125
Sat & Sun (double, 4 meals)	\$85
Sat only (3 meals)	\$40

Toddhall sleeping rooms are like a motel room. There are 2 twin beds, desk, full bathroom with shower. The Cottage sleeps 4 people in two bedrooms with twin beds. There are no single rooms in the Cottage.

**CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of March 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 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

Nathan Brown
Alex Hoelt

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
Daisy Eichen

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.



Welcome to Membership!

Alex J. Hoelt signed the church membership book on February 16, 2020. He's been part of our church since he first lit the chalice when he was 5 or 6, grew up in our RE program, attended Youth Leadership School and Youth Cons as a teenager, served as Youth Representative on the church Board, graduated from MS&T last year, and volunteers in various ways at our church.

**Next Newsletter Deadline March 22 – send info.
to: mejohanson@mindspring.com**