

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

Newsletter of the

First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

Pastor Amy Brooks

thisisamybrooks@gmail.com

Office phone: 618-462-2462

church@firstuualton.org

www.firstuualton.org



Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m.

April 2020 Theme: “Renewal”

**ALL IN-PERSON CHURCH SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES
ARE CANCELLED FOR APRIL**

Worship Services will be available on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSx-6KMgYdgy1zktuaPUTIQ>

April 5th (Palm Sunday)

Presented by Robyn Berkley

Worship Associate: Eric Johnson

April 12th (Easter)

Pastor Amy Brooks

**Worship Associate: John
Herndon**



April 19th

Pastor Amy Brooks

“Teddy Bear’s (Online) Picnic”



April 26th

Guest speaker: Amy Stark

Worship Associate: Tracey Howe-Koch

If people need help with doing their worship service videos for YouTube please get in touch with Alex Hoefft alex.j.hoefft@gmail.com. He would like to have the videos by the day before your service (i.e., Saturday).

Pastor Amy is available for office hour meetings on Wednesdays between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.; and by appointment at other times. All meetings will take place via phone or zoom call. Please text, call or email to schedule a meeting.

Email: thisisamybrooks@gmail.com

Doors

Pastor Amy Brooks

*“Love is an open door”
Princess Anna of Arendelle, Frozen*

Of late, I have had a higher than usual level of sympathy for Princess Anna.

Throwing open the doors of her home to begin interacting with other people is her biggest ambition at the beginning of the movie, *Frozen*. Within minutes she has met the man she wants to marry and together they sing the duet quoted above.

And we really do use the metaphor of an open door to symbolize the possibility of good things. It's like when all the fizzy joy of a new relationship can't be contained and needs so spill out into the whole, wide world. You need an open door to be open to all the potential goodness of love.

Excepting, of course, for in times like these.

In this season of social distancing it can feel as if we are saying no to love when we close the doors of our church, our schools, our homes. But I encourage you to consider that in stepping away from the company of others we are demonstrating the love we have for those most at risk of this very serious illness. We show our love for the whole community.

As contrary as it feels, right now love is a closed door. No spoilers, but even Anna eventually learned that danger can enter through a door that is opened unwisely.

The time will come for us to open our doors again. Meanwhile, stay home, stay safe, stay healthy. We will be together again soon.

Church of the Larger Fellowship Live Worship

For access details go to:

<https://www.questformeaning.org/worship/>

“We gather each week to worship live together. Join us Sundays around 6:45 pm (Central Time) to settle in and listen to some music. Worship will start at 7:00 p.m. After the worship service, join us for [Coffee Chat live via Zoom](#) for a chance to connect with other worship attendees for deeper conversation.”

April 2020



All “in person” Church Events and Activities Cancelled for April

Pastor Amy's office hours at church (see pg. 1 for ways to get in touch with Amy)

Anna Ds - 4/2

Troubadours of Divine Bliss concert - 4/5

Church Board Meeting

Men's Lunch Group - 4/9

Open Mic Coffee House - 4/18

4th Saturday Distribution – 4/25 (will not be “in house”)

Queer Youth Prom - 4/25

The MidAmerica Regional Annual Meeting (4/18) will be a virtual event using Zoom. See pg. 6 for further information.

Eliot Women's Retreat scheduled for May 15-17 has been cancelled until 2021.

Update on Progress on the Church Website

<http://www.firstuualton.org/>

Nathan Brown

There are now little social media buttons on the right side of the website header that will give you access to -

church Facebook site



our Instagram site



our YouTube site



The bottom footer has been updated to say 2020 instead of 2016! Now that I have 2 weeks off, I will be updating more of it as I can! Please let me know (message me) if anything isn't working (It's a work in progress)!

Your BOARD at Work

Lee Suarez, President

During the month of March, we have been working with our CPA, Katherine Valley, in getting our financial records rectified. I hope you have received an email or letter regarding your 2019-2020 Pledge Donation information. The data we have is what has been entered into our software program before Katherine arrived in mid-November and after her hiring. If you have any concerns regarding your donation figures, please contact Char McAllister, Pledge Chair at charlenemcallister613@hotmail.com or speak to Char in person.

Currently, the two task forces (Heritage and Horizon) are working on gathering facts and information. This work may be delayed due to the current Covid-19 virus situation.

We are working on New Oversight Procedures, which affects job descriptions currently in the By-Laws. We are being very vigilant in addressing all operations as quickly as possible as your Board continues to pick up office accountabilities.

Thank you goes out to Rev. Amy on mastering the church software program to get "Church this Week" back out to our members.

As President of your Board, I continue to encourage your financial support of our church. We realize that people are in varying life circumstances at this time. We ask you to please give what you can. You can mail your donation to the First Unitarian Church of Alton PO Box 494, Alton Illinois 62002 or on-line to Givelify.

Due to our Stay At Home mandate, our Worship Associates and Rev. Amy, are providing an on line service each Sunday. Please be patient with our new adventure, it is a work in progress. The March 22nd service is on line. To access it the easiest way, is to go to the Church's website (<http://www.firstuualton.org>) and in the upper right hand side is the icon for YouTube that will link one directly to the service.

Thank You for everything that you do to support the First Unitarian Church of Alton.

Let's stay connected and reach out at this uncharted time

Lee Suarez, Board President
Char McAllister, Pledge Chair

Spring Report from the Social Activities

Committee - Pat Moore

The January 18th "Game Night" was held, with a group of about 12 - 20 folks attending. Everyone seemed to have a great time, and a delicious assortment of snacks were consumed.

The February 15th "20's Jazz Speakeasy" had a smaller than expected attendance, but everyone really enjoyed the music provided by Oliver's band, with a few people even dancing. Some people came in costumes, and that, plus the lighting effects, added a great ambiance to the evening. Snacks and adult beverages were enjoyed.

The PJ Party planned for March 14th was cancelled. All April social activities have been cancelled

Depending on the status of public gatherings, on May 16 we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of Woodstock with a "60's Party." It's hoped that many people will come in costume (think tie-dye and bell bottoms) and dance to the sounds of the 60's.



RE Committee Report January – March 2020

RE Committee Chair:
Joy Hoeft
RE Committee
members: Jennifer
Lewis, Kayci Lueker

The last RE class was on March 8th due to the cancellation of all "in-person" church activities after that due to concerns about COVID-19. But between January and March 8th the Children & Youth Education class met approximately every other week. They are using the *Faithful Journeys* Curriculum.

In January, the children /youth learned about the 2nd Principle: justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. They heard about Fannie Barrier Williams (1855-1944), a Unitarian who was active in the club movement and in creating clubs for African American women. They discussed what it meant to belong and how it feels to be excluded. They also explored how organizing a group to fight injustice can be effective. (*continued on next page*)

The students came up with an idea for a Service Project, and planned how they would do it. They decided they wanted to provide Easter Baskets for the children of families who come to our 4th Saturday program. In order to make that happen, they decided to have a fundraiser by preparing a Spaghetti lunch after church on March 1st. They raised \$558.00. However due to concerns about COVID-19 they will not be able to distribute Easter baskets and when class meets again they will discuss what other service project they might do.

In February, we jumped ahead in the Principles to learn about the 5th Principle, the right of conscience and the use of democratic process, because the story and activity were about learning 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 chose several issues they were concerned about, and gave voice to their convictions in creating postcards to congregational leaders or government lawmakers. Pat Moore led this group and took the postcards and mailed them all together.

Also in February, the children/ youth learned about the 4th Principle, a free and responsible search for truth and meaning, as well as this drawing 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 learned 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 experienced the relative scale of the planets in an activity with modeling dough.

As of March 11, 2020, our RE Program has grown **from 13 children and youth** registered in Religious Education program to **approximately 20 children and Youth who attend regularly**.

The Nursery has been busy as well. They have been up to 4 children or babies in the Nursery this past quarter. Carol continues to provide activities for the PreSchool kids that focus on the 7 Principles, using Dr. Seuss stories / movies.

Fundraising Committee Report

Peg Flach

Unfortunately our community outreach and fundraising concert with the *Troubadours of Divine Bliss* scheduled for April 5th had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns. Many people volunteered to help with this event and media outlets and social media sources had been notified of the concert.

Hopefully we will be able to participate in the Moose Lodge's chicken dinner fundraiser/gathering in June.



ITEMS FROM OUR SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM

John Herndon and Ed Navarre – Co-Chairs

Social Justice Committee Quarterly update

- 1.) The committee is still in its infancy in getting organized, although efforts were being undertaken to participate in several upcoming voter registration efforts.
- 2.) Committee chairs were also looking at potential partnerships with local resources in the Alton area to begin to assess where critical needs in the community are and to see how best to insert ourselves in to the vital areas.
- 3.) Several organizers in the Alton area were planning a business showcase or expo type event, in which we had intended to participate.
- 4.) All these efforts are now on hold as the COVID-19 pandemic takes hold of the community and the need to dampen opportunities for infections to rise takes absolute priority. We anticipate that in the near future we can resume to a normal existence and move forward.
- 5.) There are a few suggestions outlined in a post submitted for the April newsletter. (*continued on next page*)
- 6.) The fourth Saturday personal care items ministry continues to thrive due to strong leadership and commitment, but sadly is also needing to change its distribution methods for the moment.

Social Justice Thoughts

As spring approaches our thoughts naturally turn to getting out and being able to interact with people, especially with one of the most important elections ever just 8 months away. Now with the very real presence in all our lives of the COVID-19 pandemic these efforts are now on hold, but, there are definitely activities we can do and steps we can take. First of all this is a great time to do our homework. Inform yourself about the issues, read about what the UUA offers in terms of advocacy help as well as where we as a religious community stand on policy and issues. Second, do your homework on local politicians, see where they stand and compare that to your personal religious convictions, your personal social justice demands. Join their email lists, even if it's a person you differ with politically, we need to be informed about where they stand on issues and participate in the discussion. Thirdly, now if you have a lot more free time, Write, Write, Write. Letters and emails to local politicians are how they know where the community stands, and please tell them you a person of deep and abiding faith. Express to them you are a proud member of the First Unitarian Church in Alton, and that our faith community demands they act with justice and equity in all things.

Be sure to check on our fellow church folks, make sure that those who are isolated are cared for and have all their needs are met. We are here for each other. We CAN get through this crisis together.

Below are also some online resources that the UUANI has provided to help with the upcoming elections.

Keep the faith, speak and act for justice!

Online Resources available for UU the Vote 2020

Handwritten Post Cards

Worried about the election of 2020? Want to make sure that more people get out and vote? Sending a Vote Forward letter is one of the easiest things you can do to increase turnout. It takes two minutes and one stamp. A concrete action you can take, no matter where you live, to get unlikely-to-vote fellow citizens to the polls. Go to <https://votefwd.org> to learn how you can help.

Map the Vote Project

MapTheVote is a project of the 501c4 non-profit Register2Vote. MapTheVote aggregates publicly available data and provides analysis on locations that are likely to have unregistered, eligible voters living at them. The map is a guide to help coordinate and improve voter registration around the country. It has been built primarily by volunteers from many organizations and is funded by Register2Vote and its founders. MapTheVote doesn't expose any personal data – it's just a way for those who wish to register voters in their communities to more easily connect with potential voters. <https://mapthe.vote/>



UU Gardeners - Char McAllister

Get your gardening tools and gloves out from their winters naps to start caring for our Church grounds.

Last season we were very productive in caring for our grounds. If you are interested in joining these hardworking members- Mark your calendar for **April 23 from 9:30 a.m. - 12 noon.**

Grounds Chair, Char McAllister will keep you posted if this date is cancelled. Gardening on our grounds will distance us at more than 6 ft. and the average number of members working at a time has been under 6 people participating at a time.

Starting in May we will have 2 days set for Gardening on the grounds. Come join us!!!



In Sympathy

Paul Hebert's younger brother Roger Hebert died last week from heart-related issues. He lived in New Hampshire. The funeral was March 24th. Unfortunately Paul and Mona were unable to attend.

4th Saturday Distribution Financial Support Needed

In March, we did not distribute care products from our church building. Instead, Robyn Berkley had planned to coordinate with Susie Delano at First Presbyterian to distribute selected, pre-bagged products in the First Presbyterian parking lot. 70 bags were made up, each with 3 rolls of toilet paper; another 60 bags contained bath soap, body wash, wipes, and a paper towel roll. At the last moment, all these plans had to be canceled, and unfortunately the distribution did not occur.

We don't know what the manner of April's distribution will be, but if at all possible we will continue providing products to those in need.

However, with there not being worship services at the church, our members and friends won't be coming to donate products. We most certainly will run short of needed items and will have to purchase most of the products (if we can find them).

Your financial support is greatly needed and appreciated. Mail your check to First Unitarian Church, PO Box 494, Alton IL 62002 and mark it for 4th Saturday program or submit your donation through Givelify.

DENOMINATIONAL EVENTS

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY 2020 – A Virtual Event

In solidarity and care for one another, **the MidAmerica Region of the UUA is transitioning our Regional Assembly, scheduled for April 18, 2020 in Rockford, Illinois, to a virtual event.**

Instead of meeting in person, **we will gather virtually on Zoom** for a report from the [Commission on Institutional Change](#) (COIC), annual Business Meeting, Keynote presentation by [Taquiena Boston](#), and previously advertised workshops. Many thanks to the COIC, MidAmerica Board, Taquiena Boston, and our workshop presenters for agreeing to participate virtually!

In order to attend this virtual event, you will need to download the FREE Zoom application. Here's a [video on how to install the Zoom app](#).

The fee for virtual online attendance is \$50.

- For those who already paid and want to attend the event through Zoom, you will remain registered and we will refund all but \$50 — expect to see that refund within 10 days. There is nothing you need to do.

- If you don't wish to or can't attend online, you may cancel your registration and request a full refund by emailing azallar@uua.org by April 5, 2020.

Though we closed Regional Assembly registration earlier this week while we made changes to adapt it to a virtual event, [registration for a virtual RA is now open](#) for anyone who has not yet registered and would like to do so.

If you have questions please email midamerica@uua.org or call (312) 636-9724. And if you reserved a hotel room, make sure to cancel the reservation.

COVID-19: UUA General Assembly Update

The General Assembly and Conference Services Staff and GA Planning Committee are monitoring local and national news, as well as hotel and conference service industry organizations, for updates, protocols and advice about the spread of the coronavirus in the United States. **Please be advised that General Assembly will take place as scheduled in Providence, Rhode Island from June 24 – June 28, 2020.**

In the months ahead, we will keep you informed on relevant changes to this very fluid situation. While we have no crystal ball, we are cautiously optimistic and encourage you take good care of yourselves and one another even as we hold those who are directly affected by this crisis in our thoughts and prayers.

Women's Alliance Scholarship

The Women's Alliance of the
First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Announces its Scholarship Competition
For the Academic Year 2020-2021

Initiated by a generous bequest from the estate of Edna Landzettel, a lifelong teacher and proponent of the importance of education in a woman's life, the scholarship will be given to a woman who is 21 years or older, responsible financially for continuing her education, a member or active friend of a Unitarian Universalist church or fellowship in the region and a registered student. (*continued next page*).

The award of \$3,000 will be made on the basis of scholarship, character and need. Application packets are now available. Please request them from:

Attn: Scholarship Committee
The Women's Alliance
First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
5007 Waterman Blvd.
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

or email: karenlsiegrist@gmail.com

**The deadline for completed applications is
May 15, 2020.**

**CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of April 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

April 2020

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
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.

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