

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. - May 2020 Theme: "Integrity"

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

**Worship Services will be available on YouTube premiering at 10:00 a.m.
each Sunday.** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSx-6KMgYdgy1zktuaPUTIQ>

Live Zoom "Coffee Hour" follows at 10:45 a.m. (See pg. 2 in this newsletter about how to access Zoom.)

May 3rd

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: Robyn Berkley

May 10th

Presented by: Jerry Johnson

**Worship Associate: Mary
Johnson**



"Flower Communion" – see pg. 3 about how to "bring"
your flowers.

May 17th

Pastor Amy Brooks

Worship Associate: Peg Flach

May 24th

Presented by: Tracey Howe-Koch

Worship Associate: John Herndon

May 31st

**Presented by: Unitarian Universalist students
from Eden Seminary (includes Sabrina Trupia
and Dee Evans)**

**If people need help with doing their worship
service videos for YouTube please get in touch
with Alex J. Hoeft alex.j.hoeft@gmail.com. He
would like to have the videos at least by the
Friday before your service.**

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.

Cell phone: 217 204 7377

Email: thisisamybrooks@gmail.com



**Unitarian Universalist Association
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.”



**All “in person” Church Events and Activities
Have Been Cancelled for May**



The **ROMEOS (Men’s Lunch group)** will meet at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 14th via **Zoom**. If

you’re not already on the Men’s Lunch email list contact Nick Pendergrass for the Zoom meeting ID. npendergrass@me.com.



ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

Every Sunday at 10:45 a.m., following the 10 a.m. videoed worship service on the church’s YouTube app, YOU are invited to a **live coffee hour** through Zoom. Please contact **Robyn Berkley** robynberkley@yahoo.com for information as to how to join the zoom coffee hour where you can see and talk with others (and often see favored pets).

4th Saturday Distribution

Due to the “shelter in place” order we did not distribute care products from the church in March or April, and we won’t be distributing from the church in May either. However, in April, Robyn made contact with Alton Works, which had a good, safe, distribution program already in place for food and products. The distribution site is in downtown Alton, on Broadway. So we donated much of our inventory to them. They are open for distribution on Wednesday and Friday from 9 to noon We are uncertain at this time what our exact plans are for May, but we want to in some way make sure that we can provide for people in need. Your ongoing financial support is greatly needed and appreciated.



May 10th – Flower Communion

The idea of a **Flower** Celebration was initiated in Prague on 4 June 1923 by Norbert Čapek, who was also the founder of the Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia. He honored the universal beauty of nature by having a **communion of flowers**.

This is an annual celebration at the First Unitarian Church of Alton. Usually people bring flowers to the worship service to share. Flowers are distributed and everyone has a stem of nature to take home.

This year it will be “a little” different. If you want to participate in this year’s sharing of the flowers, please take a photo of flower(s), or yourself with flower(s) and email that photo to Alex Hoef alex.j.hoef@gmail.com. He will take all the photos and make some kind of collage or presentation with the flowers to include in the Worship Service for May 10th.

Send your flower photos to Alex by Friday, May 8th



UUA General Assembly June 24-28, 2020 will be a totally VIRTUAL event.

The registration is only \$150 per person and being VIRTUAL there is no travel, restaurant meals, or hotel expenses for attendees to pay.

For further information, or to register, go to UUA.org/ga and click on the various links.

Next NEWSLETTER DEADLINE is MAY 25th.
Send info. to: mejohanson@mindspring.com

First Unitarian Church of Alton, Illinois

From: Lee Suarez, Board President

Subject: Church Finances and YOU

Date: April 19, 2020

To: Congregation

I want to report that we finally have better control over our financial picture. It is not totally done but we are in such a better place than we were in November. We are paying our bills on time and no longer paying late fees that were adding up while we got our arms around the financials.

Along with others in this new COVID-19 world, the Board recently has implemented several changes in operation to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and keep us safe. As you saw in Church This Week, Church events (including regular Sunday Services), will not be held in-person until further notice. The Board with the Minister will evaluate this position regularly as we move forward.

The April (ZOOM) Board meeting was focused on our financial condition. Our *Year To Date* financial statements as of 4/13/20 as reported by our CPA is somewhat skewed by the embezzlement, but we are reasonably confident that all of the theft has been identified and reported to Police and our insurance carrier. We particularly focused on December-March data since it does not include any of the theft entries, and the financials show us an average monthly deficit of **\$1,525**. This is due to a reduction in expected income in pledges. While budgeted at a conservative \$85,000, pledges are underperforming. *Year to date* donations are \$60,608 through March. This means that, as of April 17th, we project a year-end a shortfall of as much as **\$25,000**.

To reduce or eliminate this short fall requires that we control expenses, maximize pledges, and use funds from either the Reserve Account and/or the Endowment Fund to balance our budget.

For pledges alone to eliminate the deficit we need pledges to average \$7,117 for the last 3 months of this fiscal year. As a Board we have been discussing whether an expansion of the ways for members to forward their pledges might result in increased pledge income.

While increased income is our goal, none of the available options are free; all charge fees and all require additional accounting time which has a cost. Given those issues, the Board is taking the time to carefully evaluate the cost/benefit of each option.

The Board is also considering the use of our Reserve Fund of \$29,650 to cover the budget overage as another source of income to be fused into the current budget FY 2019/2020.

Another option to cover any projected shortfall is to take funds from the Endowment Fund. At the last Congregational Meeting the membership authorized a withdrawal of up to \$20,000 to apply to the budget. At the beginning of this year we were conservative and only withdrew a little over \$5,000. Again, timing is not on our side, as all stock funds have “lost” value. As of April 16th the Endowment Fund was down 16%. That money is not “lost” if we leave it invested until the Stock Market could recover, and that is our plan.

This looks like a bleak picture, but the Board believes that, with your contributions and support, we will come out at the other end in a healthy position. Different times require different solutions, and the Board is carefully reviewing each expense and each deviation from budgeted income.

The two task forces were furloughed due to the COVID-19 at the end of February, are not able to continue their research at this time as planned. Due to this setback we will be unable to accomplish our planned timeline and who knows when we can resume because of the unpredictable future while COVID-19 is still a factor.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of May 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 Hoeft
Tracey Howe-Koch
Jerry Johnson
Robert Kokenyesi
Michael Tarabulski