

# 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. – June 2020 Theme: “Mistakes”**

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

**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.)

**June 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Pastor Amy Brooks**

**Worship Associate: Tracey Howe-Koch**

**June 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Presented by: Dennis Fisher**

**Worship Associate: Peg Flach**

**June 21<sup>st</sup>**

**“Splendid Failures”**

**Presented by: Joy Hoeft**

**Worship Associate: Jerry Johnson**

**June 28<sup>th</sup>**

**This morning’s worship service will be live-streamed from the UUA “virtual” General Assembly. The sermon will be given by the Rev.**

Joan Javier-Duval who serves as Minister of the Unitarian Church of Montpelier, VT.

**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](mailto:alex.j.hoeft@gmail.com). He would like to have the videos at least by the Friday before your service.**

**Pastor Amy will NOT be holding office hours in June. She will be on vacation the first three weeks in June and then attending virtual GA. If you have pastoral care concerns please contact Sandy Shaner [wrgma2@gmail.com](mailto:wrgma2@gmail.com).**

## FROM PASTOR AMY

### **Breathe**

*"Is the mask working?" she asked me.*

*"How can I tell?"*

*"If you can breathe, then it's working."*

*— Lemony Snicket*



*There seems to be no subject more topical to the present moment than that of breathing.*

*It is an activity that many take for granted (although those who suffer from chronic illness would be quick to point out the ableism of that assumption). It is essential for life. And it is the very action aggressively attacked by the illness that now keeps us out of our building.*

*I do find it confusing that the most common complaint I notice from people who resist the requirement to wear a facemask in public is that the mask makes it difficult for them to breathe. Do they not understand that the mask serves as a device to prevent the spread of an illness that stops breath altogether?*

*And now, tragically, once again "I can't breathe" is trending because of the violent death of another black person at the hands of the police. George Floyd died, struggling to breathe, as an officer's knee pressed onto his neck.*

*What are we to do, as Unitarian Universalists, in the face of all that confronts us now? Illness, disruption of community, ignorance, police violence... none of these things are new. And yet we experience them in new ways, as they compile and compound and threaten to steal the very air from our lungs.*

*Beloveds, keep breathing.*

*Protect yourself from illness **and** from ignorance. Agitate for justice with every breath in your body. And make time to care for your whole being. Drop your shoulders, fill your lungs with air. If you can breathe, then it's working.*

## FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON

Organized 1836

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Dear Congregation,

Before moving on to the business part of this letter, we on the Board want to say that we are so thankful to the Worship Committee for providing us with Sunday Services on YouTube. We are grateful for all you are, and all you have done.

On May 12, the Board met (our second meeting via Zoom) and discussed the impact of the pandemic on all of us as well as on Church activities. A major decision was to reschedule our annual Congregational meeting from June to September when we hope to be able to reopen. In order to make that happen, Rev. Amy will create a small subcommittee to develop a process for safely reopening the building in September.

We also recognize that you may have questions about the Church's finances and staffing during this challenging time. Probably most important to all of us is that we have continued to compensate our staff. They are valuable to us, and they want to continue their work once we are back in our building. This also gives them time to think about ways of "doing Church" as we adapt to our "new normal". We ask for your patience as we explore and change.

(Personally speaking, I have learned to use Zoom, something I would never have done if not for the need to have virtual meetings. Having said that, I must add that Zoom still confounds me on occasion as my patience swiftly switches to irritation.)

Not returning to Church until September (at the earliest) means postponing our Annual Meeting, and that postponement means that we will not

have election of Board members to fill vacancies prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year in July. To fill that gap our current Board members have agreed to serve until the Annual meeting. Between now and then a Nominating Committee (of Kayci Combs Lueker, Eric Johnson, and me as Chair) will offer a slate of leaders to fill Board vacancies for the new Church year. That proposed slate will be shared with you as soon as it is available. Thank you so much, Eric and Kayci, for serving.

By now each of you have received either an email or mailed copy asking you for answers to several questions. For those who have responded so far, thank you so much. For those who have not, please do so now. Your response is essential for us to complete and recommend a budget for the 2020-2021 year. We will be using our congregation-approved 2019-2020 budget as a guide until our Annual meeting in September, but it cannot serve us for the entire fiscal year. We need your responses to do this important work.

Also, during the summer, Char will be communicating with Committee Chairs regarding their committee reports for the Annual meeting.

In closing, may our individual and collective commitment to our faith and its values enable us to adapt to new realities with grit and grace.

Lee Suarez, Board President



### In Memoriam

Patrick Murphy, a member of our church since 2009, passed away on May 5, 2020. He was a US Navy

Veteran, a musician, a pilot, and was a hypno-therapist and stage hypnotist. He was also passionate about animal therapy, and one didn't see him at church without one of his beloved dogs. A memorial service will be held at a later date.



### News About Pastor Amy

Starting in August, we will be sharing Pastor Amy with the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist congregation in Springfield IL. She will be their half-time Assistant Minister. Amy plans to continue serving our congregation and the Springfield congregation over the 2020/21 church year.



### 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.”

### 4th Saturday Distribution

Unfortunately, due to the “shelter in place” and “social distancing” guidelines we have not been distributing care products. Future plans are under discussion but at this time we do not know when the distribution will begin again nor what it will look like.



**All “in person” Church Events and Activities  
Have Been Cancelled for the Summer.**



The **ROMEOS** (Men’s Lunch group) will meet at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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).

**A New Book for 2020**

*The Way of Gratitude: A New Spirituality for Today*  
by the Rev. Galen Guengerich, Senior Minister of the  
Unitarian Church of All Souls in  
Manhattan NYC.

**To: The Congregation**  
**From: Lee Suarez, Board President**  
**Date: May 19, 2020**  
**Update:**

1. Just a reminder that a major decision was made to reschedule our Annual Meeting until the end of September instead of June. Due to covid-19, we have postponed all normal activities in the church building until September. A notice of the exact date will be given once we know the date of reopening the church. With the Annual Meeting changed, this means postponement of the election of Board members to fill vacancies prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year in July. To fill that gap our current Board members have agreed to serve until the Annual meeting.
2. Eric Johnson and Kayci Combs Lueker have agreed to be on the Nominating committee. If you ever have had any interest in any one of the Board positions, please let Eric or Kayci know. All positions rotate, so there is always a need to fill Board positions.
3. After our June Board meeting we are going to take a break till August 18<sup>th</sup> when we reconvene.

At the time of this writing to you, I find myself anxious regarding the challenges that lie before us as a community. It would seem that the embezzlement, COVID-19 (Staying Home) shapes and influences people’s thinking and behavior. Nothing like meeting person to person by the internet! When I became Board President I brought to this position enthusiasm and hope. My commitment was genuine. I anticipated making a difference in our congregation’s life

through more participation through your service to the church. WE THE PEOPLE can move us forward. With COVID-19, and the embezzlement, a sudden change has occurred in our congregation. A different tone or mood develops and everything we were doing to move us forward has had to be halted. Even when we come back as a community from this pandemic, we need to find ways to live our healthy life as we stand apart and stand together.

**Congratulations to Sabrina!  
Photo from the Virtual Awards Ceremony**



Congratulations, Sabrina Trupia, deserving 2020 recipient of the Edith and Robert T. Fauth Book Award from Eden Theological Seminary.

'The Edith and Robert T. Fauth Book Award recognizes the importance of an educated and learned clergy, the importance of books and learning resources and the need for an adequate personal library of the pastor, and is given to the Master of Divinity student having the highest academic ranking at the end of the first year of study.'

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](http://UUA.org/ga) and click on the various links.

Our church will have “virtual” delegates at GA.

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

**CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of June 2020  
2019 - 2020**

**Board Members**

Lee Suarez - President  
Char McAllister - President-Elect  
Vacant - 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

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**A little Bit of History**

**Did you know** that Alton's first high school had its start in the Unitarian Church?



Unitarian Church, Alby & E. 3rd Streets, Alton  
Madison County ILGenWeb

The church in the photo above was built for the Alton Unitarians on the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Alby Streets. It was dedicated in October 1855. In the spring of 1856 a school room was added in the basement to house a high school. The first school was a fee-based “High School for Young Ladies” which opened in Dec. 1855 in a temporary location but moved into the school room in the church as soon as the room was ready. The school remained one for “young ladies” until 1858 when it became part of the City’s free, coeducational public school system and called the “Advanced School.” The City paid rent to the church for housing the school.

Classes were held in that class room until 1866 when Lincoln School was built and the students were moved to that school.

The full research report about this school is on the Church's webpage in the "About Us" tab in "Our Congregation's History" section. The report is titled "Alton's First High School and Its Beginnings in the Unitarian Church."

For a printed copy, contact Mary Johnson.

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### **And a Little Bit More History**

The Anna D. Sparks Alliance (the Anna Ds) may possibly be the oldest continuous women's group in Alton. It was started in 1898 "to do good works" and is still a part of our church today. A short summary of its history, including facts about Anna Davenport Sparks, is found on the Church's webpage in the "About Us" tab in "Our Congregation's History" section.

A Bible given to the church in 1898 by Anna's husband David Sparks is in the sanctuary.

A binder with photos and newspaper clippings about the Alliance is available in the Kate Wuerker Room.