

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Side view of the Church from the park.
Congregation established 1836

Newsletter of the First Unitarian Church Alton, Illinois

110 East 3rd St. (location)
PO Box 494 62002 (mail)

Office phone: 618-462-2462
church@firstuualton.org
www.firstuualton.org



Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. – September 2020 Theme: “Imagination”

**ALL IN-PERSON CHURCH SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES
ARE CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.**

**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 below about how to access Zoom.)

September 6th
“Creative Imagination” – A Faith Rocket service
Presented by Jerry Johnson
Worship Associate: Mary Johnson

September 13th
INGATHERING SERVICE
Presented by Eric Johnson and the Worship
Associates
To learn how YOU can participate - see the next
page.

September 20th
“The Pandemic Project”
Presented by Dennis Fisher
Worship Associate: Peg Flach

September 27th
Service presented by Tracey Howe-Koch

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 (314-
479-2764). He would like to have the videos at
least by the Friday before your service.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR



Every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.
Contact Robyn Berkley
robynberkley@yahoo.com for zoom
login information.



**Your Part in
INGATHERING –
September 13th**

Eric Johnson writes:
In 1858 Abraham
Lincoln debated

Stephen Douglas in Alton, a few blocks down the hill from the Unitarian Church. At that time there was turmoil and violence in the country and Unitarian preachers were standing up to speak against the wrongness of slavery, often at their own peril. Mr. Lincoln said that the question of slavery was not only political but a spiritual issue as well, deeply affecting church congregations. He asked, “What disturbed the Unitarian Church in this very City two years ago?”

Ingathering is important. It’s maybe as important as it was in 1858 to not be silent about what is happening in our nation. So, as we celebrate the beginning of a new church year, I want to invite you to our Ingathering service. We gather as a religious community to be a community that seeks justice, stands on the side of love and holds each other in fellowship and support. I just don’t know that there has ever been a more important time to come together.

This year Ingathering will be a virtual online service. So, no matter where you are in the world you can join us safely on Sunday, September 13th at 10 a.m. (CDT) on our YouTube app on our homepage:

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

Not only join us but participate. It’s easy. Take a picture of yourself lighting a chalice, a candle, a tealight, a battery-operated candle, even a turning on a light. You can include yourself and your family or just take it of the light. Send that picture to ingathering@firstuualton.org. These photos are going to be put in a collage at the beginning of our service.

Then, if you have the ability, take a short 3 second video of yourself and your family saying the words **“Love, Light, and Grace.”** These words will bless us as we end our service. Just send it to the link ingathering@firstuualton.org

I just don’t know that there has ever been a more important time to come together. We welcome all faiths and those who are seeking or even feel that they have no faith.

Come to ingathering with us. Feel the strength of solidarity. I hope to see you Sunday, September 13th at 10 a.m.

Eric

**“Robyn’s Remarks” –
From the Church Board President**

Greetings Members and Friends of First Unitarian Church of Alton!

For those who do not know me, I am Robyn Berkley and I will be serving the congregation over the next three years in the Board President rotation. I have been a member of First UU for over 10 years. I am honored to lead and serve this very special spiritual home, and I encourage everyone to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns about the congregation (robynberkley@yahoo.com).

Your Board and I are getting up to speed on our budget issues and will be working on a strategic plan for our congregation to get us through the next few years. We plan to share this with you at our Annual Congregational Meeting scheduled for Sunday September 27th.

What can I tell you right now?

(1) Our pledges are down significantly such that we have decided to not have a minister for the upcoming months, given Amy Brooks’ resignation. Worship services will continue to be led by our wonderful Worship Associates, and we will work with local ministers of all faiths to help us grow spiritually as a congregation. We are also beginning a conversation with a ministerial consultant and look forward to the possibility of sharing some programming with Emerson Unitarian Chapel. Look for emails and information from our Worship Associates how you can contribute to and better engage with our virtual services.

(2) Based on recommendations from the UUA, we will continue to hold virtual services through the next congregational calendar year. Presently our services are pre-recorded and then they premiere on YouTube Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. We will be experimenting with live Zoom services over the next few months so we can better connect with congregants on a regular basis. We will follow the guidelines from health professionals to decide when we can return to live services in the church. We know you are all eager to return, as are we, and we will as soon as it is safe to do so. Our congregation’s health and safety come first!

(3) The questions we were grappling with before the pandemic have not gone away, and sadly, have only become more salient. We have some hard decisions to make regarding our building and our future as a congregation. I have faith in all of us that we will be able to move forward in a healthy way, assuming positive intent, with the best interests of our entire congregation in mind. Our mission statement below will guide every decision we make. I look forward to moving forward with this process with all of you!

We are creating and nurturing an intentional community that values acceptance, social justice, and the embodiment of UU principles. Come, let us question together.

In Love and Peace,
Robyn Berkley

“Inspire Love Seek Justice”

CREDOS

“a statement of the beliefs or aims which guide someone's actions”

Several years ago, we invited members of our faith community to share personal credos ... their “elevator speech,” so to speak. The members of the Worship Committee would like to revisit this and invite members of the current congregation to share how they choose to answer the questions “What is a Unitarian?” ... or ... “What do you believe?” ... or ... simply tell us how you came to find a home in our church family.

We'd like this to be part of upcoming Sunday Services and we want to hear from YOU! Please contact Peg Flach at pegflach@gmail.com (be forewarned: she may already have you on her radar and will be contacting ... you!).



Annual Congregational Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting, usually held in June, will be held on Sunday, September 27th at 11:00 a.m. to approve the budget and attend to other church business.

The zoom link will be sent out closer to the date.

September 2020

Church Board Highlights

The church board had two zoom meetings in August.

On August 4th, the meeting focused on getting church functions back on track. Finances and Office Management were the main topics. Our CPA, Katherine Valley, and Buddy Stricker, our IT consultant were on hand. Each board member volunteered to take on one or more administrative duties (e.g., checking the church's emails and phone messages, picking up mail, depositing money in the bank, reading the copier meter monthly, arranging to meet the pest control employee monthly, and the like.)

At the August 25th meeting the Board's oversight of Committees was discussed, with plans for Board Members to be Committee liaisons. Alex and Nathan will be the Social Media/Website/Tech liaisons. Carol will Chair / liaison with the Pastoral Care Committee. Robyn will liaison with the Worship Committee. Pat will coordinate virtual social events.

Nathan has made several updates to the church's homepage making it more user-friendly.

The development of a new church Directory is underway with a draft copy being sent out to members hopefully early in September.

The Board is planning to have a zoom meeting on September 2nd with Dr. Claudia Hall, a ministerial consultant who is also working with Emerson Chapel.

The next Board meeting will be September 8th where the budget for the 2020-2021 church year will be the focus.

The Board is planning a zoom retreat on September 16th.

The Annual Congregational Meeting, usually held in June, will be held on Sunday, September 27th at 11:00 a.m. to approve the budget and attend to other church business. The zoom link will be sent out closer to the date.

Mary Johnson, Board Secretary

Next Newsletter Deadline – To Mary Johnson by Monday, September 28th mejohanson@mindspring.com



Electronic Financial Donations

You can now make a financial donation to the church through PayPal.

The blue logo icon is in the upper right hand corner of the church's homepage <http://www.firstuualton.org/>.

Nathan Brown, one of our media gurus, has also put an envelope icon up in that right hand corner. By clicking on the envelop you can send an email directly to the church.



Building and Grounds Report

Several projects have been completed or plans are in the works.

A plumber installed a turn off valve for the leaking spigot at the back of the church. This installation had to be done in a crawl space inside the building. The plumber also ran a camera through the drainpipes under the building but was only able to get partly through due to a massive clog of leaves and debris. We are uncertain about the cost of having that clog removed.

Michael Tarabulski filled in the large crack on the top step of the RE entrance porch with Redi mix. He also blow-torched the many weeds growing in the brick sidewalk in front of the church.

Bids will be gotten for the trimming of the evergreen shrubbery along the Alby St. and 3rd St. walls.

Nathan Brown is looking into safety issues around the crumbling and uneven long stone steps with the idea of gating them off.

Bids will be gotten for re-shingling the roof over the church's front porch as the shingles are continually coming off.

A workday may be scheduled for some time in September.



4th Saturday Distribution Planning Team

Volunteers are needed to help figure out how we can start again to provide personal and home care products to those in need. We must consider safe distancing, mask wearing, and not allowing people to come into the building as they are used to doing. If you have some ideas to share on how we can keep everyone safe and still distribute products, please get in touch with me. Mary Johnson mejohanson@mindspring.com. Due to the current rise of covid-19 in Madison county it is doubtful that we will have a distribution in September. However, it would be nice to have a plan in place once we can start some sort of distribution.

The Men's Lunch group will meet at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, September 10th via Zoom. If you're not already on the Men's Lunch email list contact Nick Pendergrass for the Zoom meeting ID. npendergass@me.com.



CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of September 2020 2020 - 2021

Board Members

President: Robyn Berkley robynberkley@yahoo.com

Secretary: Mary Johnson mejohanson@mindspring.com

Treasurer: Nathan Brown
nathan.brown0621@outlook.com

Member at Large: Aiden Crist arexboi@gmail.com

Member at Large: Alex Hoeft alex.j.hoeft@gmail.com

Member at Large: Carol McGrew
carol_mcgrew@yahoo.com

Member at Large: Pat Moore patjimmoore@charter.net

President Elect: To be Determined

Youth Representatives: To be Determined

COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds

Co-Chair - Tom Cochran
Co-Chair - Michael Tarabulski
Grounds - TBD

Endowment Fund

Jerry Johnson
Tracey Howe-Koch

Fund Raising

Co-Chair - Peg Flach
Co-Chair - TBD

Membership

Co-Chair - Mary Weber
Co-Chair - TBD

Newsletter

Mary Johnson

Pastoral Care Associates

Carol McGrew - Chair
Ruth Maskow
Pat Murrell
Sandy Shaner
Mary Weber

Pledge Drive

TBD

RE Council

Joy Hoeft
Jennifer Lewis
Kayci Combs-Lueker

Social Events Coordinator

Co-Chair - Pat Moore
Co-Chair - TBD

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

Robyn Berkley
Peg Flach
John Herndon
Joy Hoeft
Tracey Howe-Koch
Eric Johnson
Jerry Johnson
