

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

## Newsletter of the First Unitarian Church Alton, Illinois



*150-year old Elm tree  
in newly trimmed RE yard.  
Congregation established 1836*



*110 East 3<sup>rd</sup> St. (location)  
PO Box 494 62002 (mail)*

Office phone: 618-462-2462  
[church@firstuualton.org](mailto:church@firstuualton.org)  
[www.firstuualton.org](http://www.firstuualton.org)

**Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. – October 2020 Theme: “Grief”**

**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 11:00 a.m. (See below about how to access Zoom.)**

October 4<sup>th</sup>  
Presented by John Herndon

October 11<sup>th</sup>  
Presented by Robyn Berkley

**THIS SERVICE WILL BE LIVE ON ZOOM –  
DETAILS FORTHCOMING**

October 18<sup>th</sup>  
Presented by Jerry Johnson  
Worship Associate: Mary Johnson

October 25<sup>th</sup>  
Presented by Paula Moore

**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.**

### ZOOM COFFEE HOUR



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

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

Greetings everyone! I want to say thank you to everyone who participated in the Congregational Meeting that was scheduled on 9/27/2020. We were able to give everyone an update on the financial position of the church, details on the embezzlement case, and an outline of what we have accomplished and what our goals are over the next few months. The meeting minutes will be available for all to review soon. For those of you who missed the meeting, here are a few highlights about our upcoming plans:

1) We want to engage congregants more in our service. Along with asking people to share their UU CREDO, you may be called upon to do a reading, or if you play an instrument or sing, perhaps play/sing a song for our service. We will have a live service on Zoom on Sunday October 11<sup>th</sup>, and we plan to find a way to have a bread communion at the end of November! Kayci had an awesome idea and I must run it by the Worship Associates! Please let me or any of the Worship Associates what you'd like to see more or less of in our Sunday services. We are here to support you.

2) The Board met with a congregational consultant, the Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall, and she summed up our congregation as such: First Unitarian Church of Alton ***Includes the Excluded*** in all we do. Our goal is to try to do this, even though we must work remotely during the pandemic. For example, we are looking for ways to safely continue our Fourth Saturday Personal Care Items distribution. The goal of including the excluded will drive all that we try to accomplish over the upcoming months. This aligns well with our Mission of being ***Outward Reaching and Inward Seeking***. Claudia provided us with several important strategies over the next few months. Of utmost importance we must strengthen, nurture, and maintain our church culture during this time. She suggested two important tasks. First, we need to schedule healing circles for current and past congregants to address the hurts and pains we've experienced over the last few years. Second, she suggests we develop a Right Relationship Covenant for the church to guide how we have difficult conversations and handle conflicts. At our next Board meeting in October, we will work together as a Board to begin our plan for how to accomplish these goals and strategies!

3) We will be developing a COVID policy for the congregation to guide how and when people can use our building. More information on this will follow.

4) We can only do this work if we can get support from congregants. Are you interested in social justice issues, buildings and grounds work, calling and connecting with home bound congregants? Let us know ... we'd love to have you help ... even if it's an hour or two here or there!

5) We will be working with the UU Eden Seminarians on a few projects ... most importantly some Adult RE opportunities. Look for information on this in the coming weeks!

6) In terms of financials, we are in a solid but stagnant position. Our pledges are sitting at 50% of what they were a few years ago. Because pledges are down, we are not able to commit to having a minister for the time being. Instead, we will focus on keeping our building in good shape. Buildings and Grounds have worked on many repair and maintenance issues. Along with this, we have budgeted for pastoral support as well as congregational consulting to help us stay connected and thrive despite our distance from each other. Our hope is to spend UNDER our current projected budget and if possible, to put money back into the endowment principle to bring us back to a better financial place slowly but surely. We have a solid team and system in place to ensure we do not have the financial vulnerabilities we had in the past, making us susceptible to embezzlement again. At the end of the day, the Board is responsible for the financial health of the church and we will continue to keep you abreast of issues with full transparency.

I am grateful to work with an amazing Board of Directors. They have great ideas and are willing to do the hard work. If you have ideas or feedback, do not hesitate to contact me or anyone on the Board. We are here for you ... and we want to hear from you!

Cheers, Robyn

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*“Now is the accepted time, not tomorrow, not some more convenient season. It is today that our best work can be done and not some future day or future year. It is today that we fit ourselves for the greater usefulness of tomorrow. Today is the seed time, now are the hours of work, and tomorrow comes the harvest and the play time.*

(W.E.B. Du Bois 1868-1963)

**2020-2021 Church Budget Approved at the  
Congregational Meeting 9-27-2020**

<b>PROJECTED INCOME</b>	
Endowments - Local and UUA	\$7,632
Interest	\$120
General	\$9,000
Pledges	\$48,000
Special Projects	\$100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$64,852*</b>
<b>PROJECTED EXPENSES</b>	
Administration and Building Overhead	\$38,888
UUA Program Contribution	\$2,100
Payroll	\$19,313
Program	\$4,550
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$64,851*</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cents were not counted here</li> </ul>	

A line by line breakdown of income and expenses is available if you are interested.



**JOYS**

Stacey Wolff and Charles Miphoro have announced their engagement. Best wishes to the happy couple.

Robyn Berkley has bought a new home in Troy, Illinois. She hopes to move in before Christmas.



Aiden Crist, Hedda Kirk, and their family moved into a new home in Caseyville, Illinois.

**SORROWS**



Long-time church member Midge Hallett died on September 4<sup>th</sup>. She had asked there be no visitation or memorial service. A private service was held at Valhalla Memorial Park in Alton. Midge joined the church in 1965. The family suggested

memorial donations to be given to either the First Unitarian Church of Alton or the Alton Little Theatre. Our condolences to her sons Matt, Mark, and Hugh.

The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Claudia Harju and Phil Embree on the death of their daughter-in-law, Suzanne Harju on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in Carbondale, IL



**“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](mailto:pegflach@gmail.com) (be forewarned: she may already have you on her radar and will be contacting ... you!).

**Next newsletter deadline – October 28<sup>th</sup>.**

**Send your news to Mary Johnson**

[mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com)

## Pandemic

(A poem by UU Minister the Rev. Dr. Lynn Ungar and used with permission.)

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

—Lynn Ungar 3/11/20

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### CHURCH BOARD MEETING

The Board will have its regular monthly meeting via zoom on Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 8 p.m. If there is an item you would like the Board to address, please contact Robyn Berkley – [robynberkley@yahoo.com](mailto:robynberkley@yahoo.com)

## Save the Date - "Our Goal of World Community: The UN at 75"

Thursday, October 22, 2020 | 6:00 PM Eastern

The UN is our greatest hope for achieving our UU Sixth Principle "goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all." As Unitarian Universalists we must do all we can to support the UN and work to achieve its priorities of human rights, peace, sustainable development, and humanitarian action. This year, the United Nations is celebrating its 75th birthday, and the Unitarian Universalist Association Office at the UN, in collaboration with the Canadian Unitarian Council, will be commemorating that anniversary with a special virtual event co-sponsored by the NGO Committee on Human Rights: "Our Goal of World Community: the United Nations at 75." In our current political-, social-, economic-, health-, climate moment, continued involvement with and investment in global cooperation could not be more critical. During this event we'll talk about how Unitarian Universalists can make our mark for global justice. Mark your calendar for 6:00 PM Eastern on Thursday, October 22, 2020. We look forward to sharing more details and how to register in the coming weeks.

Featured speakers will include:

- Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, President, Unitarian Universalist Association
- Rev. Alicia R. Forde, Director, Unitarian Universalist Association International Office
- Hawa Diallo, United Nations Department of Global Communications (invited)
- Chris King, United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (invited)
- Bruce Knotts, Director, Unitarian Universalist Association Office at the United Nations
- Craig Mokhiber, Director, New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Bobbi Nassar, Co-chair, Nongovernmental Organization Committee on Human Rights at the United Nations
- Vyda Ng, Executive Director, Canadian Unitarian Council
- Gillian Sorenson, International Rescue Committee, formerly Assistant Secretary General at the UN, then with the UN Foundation. She is a lifelong UU.





### 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday Distribution Planning

Currently we are distributing \$10.00 Dollar Tree gift cards one Saturday a month at the curbside bag lunch provided at First Presbyterian Church down the street.

We would really like to start distributing personal care and household products again. But we need a startup plan and we need people to help develop this plan. We must consider safe distancing, mask wearing, and not allowing people to come into the building as they are used to doing.

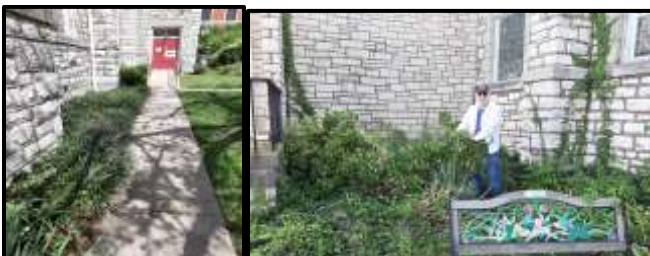
If you have some ideas to share on how we can keep everyone safe and still distribute products, please get in touch with Mary Johnson [mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com). Due to the current rise of covid-19 in Madison county we don't know if we'll be able to distribute in October. However, it would be nice to have a plan in place once we can start some sort of distribution.



### Building and Grounds Report

A workday was held on September 4<sup>th</sup>. The plantings along the park-side sidewalk were trimmed and cleaned out by Pat and Mary. The honeysuckle was pulled

up from the RE yard and other trimming done there by Wayne and Michael.



Wayne



Michael



Pat

### ANOTHER WORKDAY IS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10<sup>th</sup>. Y'ALL COME! OUTSIDE AND INSIDE WORK IS AVAILABLE.



The Board hired Vail Landscaping to trim back the evergreen shrubbery along Alby St. and 3<sup>rd</sup> St. as well as clean up part of the overgrowth in the RE yard.

As a "temporary fix" for safety, Nathan Brown has chained off the crumbling and uneven long stone steps leading up from the corner. Plans are also in place to install security cameras at least two doors leading into the building.



The Board hired RSP Construction to re-shingle the roof over the church's front porch with dark charcoal grey shingles

The Men's Lunch group will meet at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> 10<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).



**MORE ABOUT WORKDAY – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10<sup>th</sup> – 9:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. – COME WHEN YOU CAN. BRING GARDENING TYPE TOOLS IF YOU PLAN TO WORK OUTSIDE.**

**TASKS:**

Cleaning out the flower beds in the front of the church.

Cleaning out the flower beds against the RE wall and against the sanctuary wall in the RE yard.

Painting the trim around the RE porch windows (paint and brushes will be provided).

Painting the Alby Street door (paint and brushes will be provided).

Inside work: straightening up the shelves in the buffet and the closet – straightening up the cabinets in the Wuerker Room and the Kitchen.

Cleaning out window wells. Plus, other tasks to be determined.

**Let Pat Moore know if you plan to come on Oct. 10 – [patjimmoore@charter.net](mailto:patjimmoore@charter.net)**

**Who’s Doing Church Office Tasks?**

Since we have no office administrator now, and no immediate plans to hire someone, Board members are taking on several office-related jobs.

Nathan Brown picks up the mail several days a week, makes bank deposits of checks that come in, pays some of the bills (others come through electronically to our CPA Katherine Valley), and Nathan also focuses on building safety and security by making several walks weekly through the building and grounds.

Whichever Board member is available meets Garella Pest Control for the scheduled monthly spraying for insects in the building and whoever is available reads and sends in the Copier meter reading at the appropriate time.

Mary Johnson daily logs into the church’s two email addresses and forwards any relevant emails to the appropriate person. She also remotely checks the church’s answering machine each day.



**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/>.



You may also donate using Givelify. Click on the large green square on the church’s homepage <http://www.firstuualton.org/>

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

**The new Church Directory has been emailed out. If you have not received a Directory, and want a copy, contact Mary Johnson. If you found an error in your Directory, also contact Mary. [mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com)**

**CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of September 2020  
2020 - 2021**

**Board Members**

President: Robyn Berkley [robynberkley@yahoo.com](mailto:robynberkley@yahoo.com)

Secretary: Mary Johnson [mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com)

Treasurer: Nathan Brown  
[nathan.brown0621@outlook.com](mailto:nathan.brown0621@outlook.com)

Member at Large: Aiden Crist [arexboi@gmail.com](mailto:arexboi@gmail.com)

Member at Large: Alex Hoeft [alex.j.hoeft@gmail.com](mailto:alex.j.hoeft@gmail.com)

Member at Large: Carol McGrew  
[carol\\_mcgrew@yahoo.com](mailto:carol_mcgrew@yahoo.com)

Member at Large: Pat Moore [patjimmoore@charter.net](mailto:patjimmoore@charter.net)

President Elect: 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  
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

## The Church Has Left the Building

By [Margaret Weis](#) (UUA WorshipWeb)

The church is not a place; it is a people.

The church is not only a steeple above the treelined streets, and cars.

Rather, it is a people proclaiming to the world that we are here for the work of healing and of justice.

The church is not walls built stone upon stone, held together by mortar

but rather person, linked with person, linked with person:

all ages and genders and abilities—

a community built on the foundation of reason, faith, and love.

The church is not just a set of doors open on Sunday morning,

but the commitment day after day, and moment after moment,

of our hearts creaking open the doors of welcome to the possibility of new experience and radical welcome.

The church is not simply a building, a steeple, a pew.

The church is the gathering together of all the people, and experiences, and fear, and love, and hope in our resilient hearts;

gathering, however we can, to say to the world: welcome, come in, lay down your heartache, and pick up hope and love.

For the church is us—each and every one of us— together, a beacon of hope to this world that so sorely needs it.