

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

Newsletter of the

First

Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

110 East 3rd St. (location)

PO Box 494 62002 (mail)

Office phone: 618-462-2462

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



Congregation established 1836

JANUARY 2021

Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m.
January 2021 Theme: "Balance"

Some Worship Services will be live on Zoom at 10:00 a.m.

<https://siue.zoom.us/j/726948775> (that's a j not an i) - PASSWORD: 551868

Others are pre-recorded and will premiere on Our YouTube site at 10:00 a.m.
Click on the YouTube icon in the upper right corner of the church's website.

Due to technical issues, sometimes the services do not upload exactly at 10 a.m.
Check for a message on UU Friends regarding the start of any service.

Our live Zoom "Coffee and Conversation" time follows at 11:00 a.m. at the Zoom link listed above.



January 3, 2021 at 10 a.m.

on YouTube

"Return from a Far Country"

Speaker: The Rev. Khleber Van Zandt

Worship Associate: Peg Flach

This is a virtual field trip to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice, Florida, where Rev. Van Zandt will share insights and adventures from his sabbatical trip to Italy just as Covid emerged. Rev. Van Zandt served as minister of our church from 2005 to 2014.

January 10, 2021 at 10 a.m.

on Zoom

"Our Faith is not personal, but about Being Present, Accompanying our Neighbors here and now."

Speaker: John Herndon

This is a discussion of the upcoming priorities in 2021 of the UUANI (Unitarian Advocacy Network of Illinois) and how our congregation may help to carry out those priorities.





**January 17, 2021
at 10 a.m.**

on YouTube

**The Troubadours
of Divine Bliss** will
be sharing their
spoken and musical
talents at the unique

Sunday offering. The Troubadours have seven recordings, with an eighth in the works. They are spiritual, environmental, and social justice activists who sing of the Love that springs from with, respect for the Earth, human rights and healing the heart. Get to know them at

<https://www.troubadoursdivinebliss.com/home>.

Worship Associate: Peg Flach

January 24, 2021 at 10 a.m.

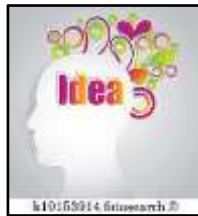
on YouTube

“The Collector”

Speaker: Dennis Fisher

Worship Associate: Peg Flach

Dennis will offer insights about the things that we all collect. It might be stamps, butterflies, or glass figurines. But the best collections consist of ideas. The ideas we gather tell us about the world we choose to inhabit in the reverie on our idea collections.



January 31, 2021 at 10 a.m. Whether on Zoom or YouTube will be announced later.

Speaker: Robyn Berkley

If people need help with doing their worship service videos for 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.

The deadline for the next Newsletter is Monday, January 25th. Please send submissions to Mary Johnson mejohanson@mindspring.com

“Robyn’s Remarks”

President's Column

Welcome to 2021! It has been one heckuva year...and I am grateful that we are here together, happy, healthy, and moving forward to a new year. January brings some fun for us in terms of worship and other activities. We will be scheduling our Difficult Conversations workshop, followed by work with our congregational consultant to build a right relationship covenant as we enter the Spring. We will have a wide variety of fun services for January including the Troubadours of Divine Bliss, Dennis Fisher, and our old friend Khleber Van Zandt who will share stories of his time in Italy during the pandemic.

I thank all of you who continue to make your donations, and who have answered the call to give just a bit more for those causes that are needed. We are in good financial shape right now given everything and continue to do the work of the church through your donations. I also want to send my blessings to the families of our congregational members who left us this year: Midge Hallett, Patrick Murphy, Gerry Gilman, and Phil Finley. Their presence will be greatly missed.

If you have not joined us for online services or coffee hour, I send you an invitation to join us to chat, even if for only a few minutes. As the COVID vaccine becomes more widespread, we will be in touch with our Regional Consultant about a time when it will be reasonable to return to the church for live services and activities on the premises. In the meantime, the Worship Associates will work hard to provide meaningful virtual services for you all, and the Board will continue to support your needs over the next few months. Perhaps as the weather gets warmer, we will consider an outdoor socially distanced service!

If you have an interest in serving and would like to consider being the President Elect for next year, please don't hesitate to talk to me or anyone on the Board. We need everyone's help to continue to support the church and any time you can donate to the cause is greatly appreciated.

Happy New Year...with Love, Light, and Grace

Robyn Berkley

Miscellaneous News and Notes

Congregational Survey - Responses Needed

If you haven't filled out and returned the Congregational Survey sent out a few weeks ago, please do so now. Your responses will help the Board plan for the upcoming months. Thank You!

Church Board Meeting

The Board will have its regular monthly meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, January 12th 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



The Men's Group will be gathering on Zoom at 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 14th.

If you are not already on the Men's Group email list, contact Nick Pendergrass for the Zoom meeting ID npendergrass@me.com

Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 24th, 2021

11 a.m. on Zoom

Please plan to attend this virtual semi-annual meeting.

<https://siue.zoom.us/j/726948775>

(that's a j not an i) - PASSWORD 551868

Joys, Sorrows, Concerns

If you have a joy, sorrow, or concern you would like included in the "Church This Week" flyer, or in the monthly newsletter, please email that information to Mary Johnson mejohanson@mindspring.com or call her at her

home. To have it included in "Church This Week" please get your information in by Tuesday of each week. The deadline for the next newsletter is Monday, January 25th.

A Letter from Lee - A Dialog

Dear 2020,

Oh, you have been quite a year! We sure have seen better years. You have brought joy as well as sorrow to our lives this year. Who knew that we would need to stay home and distance ourselves from friends and love ones - and wear a mask so we could stay alive and protect others from a pandemic in our country.

Say 2020, what has brought you happiness this year?

Well, 2021, I'm grateful for new friends and old ones, and that those around me are safe and healthy as one can be at our age. I'm always happy about the possibilities of goodness and love. But I am sad for what humans do to one another when our world should be a kinder and better place. 2021, at your infancy, you can bring hope and love to all humanity. Because we sure have been out of sorts for a while. One of my 2020 joys was having volunteered on the Board of the Alton UU Church, a place where my heart was. Unfortunately, it was also my greatest sorrow. Why is that 2020? Finding out that people you thought you could trust ... Failed. The fraud on the church was devastating. Nothing could be accomplished other than survival. It took a toll on all involved.

But 2021, with time, love and caring, you should be able to reap the benefits from the work that was accomplished.

What is YOUR wish for 2021? For all those who have an empty chair at their table, may those families find peace and may we treat one another with KINDNESS. Today is Big with Blessing for a better tomorrow.

Sincerely 2020 (Lee Suarez)



Financial Donations to the Church

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.

Or mail your check to the church at PO 494 Alton, IL 62002.

VIRTUAL UUA General Assembly

June 23-27, 2021

2021 Registration Information

Registration for virtual GA 2021 is **\$200 per person**. Financial support for registration as well as a payment plan are available. General Assembly registrants receive access to the 2021 Online Participation Portal, including live, simulive, and on-demand video content, the virtual exhibit hall, chat features, support, and a (new!) GA mobile app.

For further information go to:

<https://www.uua.org/ga/registration>

Summary of Minutes of the December 8th Board Meeting

Financials: Endowments funds did well in the stock market. Pledges are at \$27,035, over halfway to the \$48,000 budgeted. Income to date is \$45,045. Ghost tours brought in \$1,348. Expenses to date total \$23,361. Restricted donations have come in for memorials and social service projects.

Building & Grounds: The Board approved spending up to \$1000 for four security cameras, one for each door.

A congregational survey was sent out to members and friends. The results will help the Board move forward with planning for the future.

The issue of parking was once again brought up and within in the next two weeks contact will be made with City Hall to initiate a discussion on our need for accessible parking.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of January 2021 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

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.

George Washington Carver, 1864-1943