

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

Newsletter of the

First

Unitarian

Church

Alton, Illinois

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



Photo by Michael Tarabulski
Congregation established 1836.



Office phone: 618-462-2462

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

August 2021

Services held at the church will also be live streamed to YouTube on the church's homepage

or <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSx-6KMgYdgy1zktuaPUTIQ>

THE AUGUST 1ST SERVICE WILL BE HELD AT 10:00 a.m.
AT THE MOOSE LODGE IN EDWARDSVILLE.

August 1 – 10:00 a.m. at the Moose Lodge

The service will be held in the lakeside annex behind the Lodge. (Winner Winner Chicken Dinner starts at 11:00 a.m.) 7371 Marine Rd./Rt. 143; Edwardsville IL

Speaker: Robyn Berkley

August 8 – 10 a.m. at Church & via Zoom

Speaker: Tracey Howe-Koch

Worship Associate: Matt Koch

August 15 – 10 a.m. at Church & via Zoom

Speaker: Sheila Voss

Sermon Title: “Rethinking food: A love story”

Those who study, steward, and value nature ...know that conventional food and agriculture systems today represent the biggest threat to healthy lands and waters. Yet our food choices and identities, which are intensely personal and deep-rooted, are sometimes out-of-sync with these and other values, from nature and the environment to social justice and global health.

Rethinking food and food systems—not just as individuals, but as a global community--can solve some of our world's biggest challenges. Local sustainability and biodiversity advocate Sheila Voss will share why, after spending 25+ years in the biodiversity conservation field, she is now laser-focused on the future of food. She'll reflect on several UU principles that have shaped, challenged, and inspired her along the way.

Bio: Sheila Voss currently serves as the Vice President of Communications for The Good Food Institute, an international nonprofit building a sustainable, healthy, and just food system. Prior to joining GFI, Sheila served for 10 years as Vice President of Education for Missouri Botanical Garden and for 15 years at Anheuser-Busch's SeaWorld and Busch Gardens parks, where she led conservation partnerships and produced Emmy-award winning wildlife programming. Sheila remains active in local and regional efforts focused on urban nature, clean energy, and circular, low-waste.

Worship Associate: John Herndon

August 22 – 10 a.m. at Church & via Zoom

Speaker: Jerry Johnson

Worship Associate: Mary Johnson

August 29 – 10 a.m. at Church & via Zoom

INGATHERING

Speaker: Robyn Berkley

Worship Associates Needed



If you think you might be interested in serving as a Worship Associate, please contact [Robyn Berkley](#) to get more information about the responsibilities involved.

Winner-Winner Chicken Dinner

After the service on Sunday, you are invited to stay for the Moose Lodge’s Chicken Dinner. Some of our members will be volunteering to work in the kitchen, the dining room, and do a bake sale. This event is a fund raiser for our church as we get a percentage of the dinner ticket sales and all money brought in from the bake sale. If you’d like to volunteer to help at the Dinner or contribute to the bake sale, please contact [Peg Flach](#).

Dinner Cost: \$10 for adults; \$5 for children. The meals include fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn & green beans, fresh salad. Desserts are available to purchase at the bake sale.

President’s Column

Greetings all!

August's theme of the month is Community. I was really struck by this after last week's annual meeting and John Herndon's sermon. If you were able to attend, live or virtual, you heard all the things we accomplished over the year and our plans for moving forward. What I left with after the meeting is that people are thoughtful and care very much about our church and each other in the following ways:

1) John's sermon set the tone for the day...the church...OUR COMMUNITY...is the people, not the building. As we begin the long process of determining what we need to do about our building, I want to remind everyone, that it is the community that needs to come first. More on this in a bit.

2) What better way to demonstrate community than to sing together with a joyful voice! I know requests have been made for years about having a choir again. There was a critical mass of people at the meeting who had an interest in starting a choir for the Fall and I couldn't be more thrilled. I can't sing worth anything, but I love to listen and to sing along! So, if you are interested, let us know. We are in discussions about who will serve as Choir Master, and once that is resolved we will get the process underway. Even if the choir is small, it will be lovely to hear voices singing together again, in community.

3) As we discussed our needs for the upcoming year, I greatly appreciated hearing from people who were helping us come up with alternative ways to address some of our staffing concerns. People were willing to say, "I can help!" That made my heart sing! We need you...ALL OF YOU...to do your part. I have the volunteer forms you sent back with your stewardship pledges. I now have the time to review the forms and compile our volunteer list. I look forward to seeing new faces helping as they can, even if it is just an hour here or there!

4) Our plan for the building is going to shift from previous plans. Instead of the congregation doing the research, the Board will begin the process of investigating options and working with volunteers from our church community to come up with a plan we will present to the congregation over the next year. As John's sermon outlined, the community is the people. And our community's needs must be put up front, first and foremost. What does this mean? It means the highest priority for keeping the building as our church home is to ensure we have handicap accessibility, and parking needs are met. Tall order I know...but we are committed to exhausting every option to ensure the church building can meet those needs before we commit to anything else. Congregants/Members with mobility needs are essential to our community. As our community ages, our attention has to be put on how to ensure everyone can get into our building and access what they need, to be a part of the community and have their voice heard. This is true inclusion and anything less than that violates our UU principles. We will be reaching out to members with mobility issues to discuss the specific needs they

have so those needs are accommodated in our research and planning.

5) As well, this building discussion is going to be emotional. I am asking you all to take a deep breath...go ahead...take two...

INHALE...EXHALE...INHALE...EXHALE

This is going to be hard...we have an emotional connection to this beautiful building. But we also don't have the volunteer strength to do this work anymore AND we need the building to meet our needs. If we decide we can no longer call this place our home, we have another round of tough discussions about WHERE we will move. Some are arguing for Edwardsville... some say they won't go to Edwardsville...some say Alton is too far from potential congregants elsewhere in the Metro-East. There is no PERFECT solution, but I am asking all of us to not put the cart before the horse. The first order of business is to explore all options...nothing reasonable is off the table. I am empowering ALL OF THIS COMMUNITY to be creative in coming up with ideas and solutions. If you want to help, please volunteer to help do the research and work with us collectively. And please remember, ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT! We all want what is best for the church...we will not be able to please everyone, and the process will be filled with grief as well as joy. Let's honor all the emotions and put our COMMUNITY first in the discussion.

I'm committed to this community...when I sat in Florida after my father's death and watched our service remotely, I felt so grounded and content to know you were all there together, and that I could be a part of the process. THIS IS WHAT COMMUNITY LOOKS LIKE! I love you all and look forward to another year of worshiping and supporting each other on our spiritual journey, wherever it takes us.

Love and Light, Robyn

Safety Guidelines for Worship Services

As we gather once again for worship services in our church, we will be following the church's Pandemic Task Force guidelines.

As the weeks progress and the CDC guidelines are updated, our precautions will change. For now, as we start up again, masks will still be required. For social distancing purposes every other pew has been roped off. The joys and sorrows ritual using the water and rocks will not be used. The offering plate will not be passed, instead a basket will be available in which you can put your donation. No refreshments or beverages except water will be available at our "coffee and conversation" hour – so if you need that morning coffee you are welcome to bring your own.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) from Pat Moore, Alton UUSC Rep.



During the pandemic I did not sponsor any donations from our church members to the UUA social action organization, UUSC, but if you could spare a little money anytime this fall to help with some important causes being supported right now, just go to UUSC.org to see more about the causes and donate if you feel compelled. Jim and I have supported UUSC for about 30 years now, I hope some of you will want to join us.

Global Grassroots Giving Circle

The church received an email from a former RE student at our church, Zara Bott-Goins, who now works for an organization called Global Grassroots which "... works at the intersection of mindfulness, trauma-healing, water access and women's development in Rwanda." If you are interested in supporting this work, or want to learn more go to <http://globalgrassroots.org> or email Zara at zbottgoins@globalgrassroots.org.

Social Gatherings



Anna Ds Lunch Meeting – Thursday, August 5 11:30 a.m.

The church women's group, the Anna D Sparks Alliance (aka the Anna Ds), will meet for lunch at on Thursday, August 5 between 11 and 11:30 a.m. at Bakers & Hale. We will be in the outdoor patio that has both ceiling and directional fans.

The address is 7120 Montclair Ave, Godfrey, IL 62035. To see the menu or for directions go to <https://bakershale.com/>

Note this is a change from the originally planned restaurant, Fazzi's, which was listed in emails and in *This Week at Church*.

Please let [Sandy Shaner](#) know if you plan to come to the to lunch on August 5.

Men's Group Lunch Meeting – Thursday, August 12

The men's group will be meeting for lunch at 11:30 a.m. somewhere. As the date draws closer a decision will be made as to where and the usual participants notified.



If you have questions, or want to get on the Men's Group notification email list, contact [Paul Hebert](#) or [Nick Pendergrass](#).



Carol McGraw invites you to attend her LEGO themed 50&1/2 birthday party (earlier planned party postponed). The party will be from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, August 21. RSVP to [Carol](#).

A big **THANK YOU** to Carol for decorating the Wuerker Room for Gay Pride Week as well as decorating for the 4th of July.

Church Board News

The Board held two meetings in July. At the July 12 zoom meeting we accepted the resignation of Nathan Brown as Treasurer due to his work and graduate school time constraints. Nathan will continue as liaison to Building and Grounds. Our consulting minister, the Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall attended the zoom meeting, and we discussed what we want/need from a minister and how to best present the stay/go questionnaire to the congregation. We agreed that having an RE coordinator was a very high priority, and also decided that having part-time office staff was also important.

At the July 20 zoom meeting Buddy Stricker and Katherine Valley were in attendance to present the proposed 2021-2022 budget which was later approved at the Annual Congregational Meeting held on July 25. The Board members also discussed the need for hiring out the grounds landscape work as well as finding a professional company to install the security cameras.

Annual Congregational Meeting Report 11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Twenty-three people attended (17 in person and 6 on zoom) and a quorum (19 needed) was declared. President Robyn Berkley gave an overview of past and current activities and plans.

Our endowment fund has reached \$213,997 and the \$40,000 we recently transferred from our bank account into Pax World mutual funds gained \$1,300.

\$62,030 has been pledged. With income from other sources the total income expected is \$84,206. We hope to hire a part-time RE Coordinator, a part-time office staffer, and have increased the funding to pay guest speakers and additional ministerial support.

The possibility of hiring a contract minister (part-time) for next year was discussed and a committee will be needed to begin that work through the UUA MidAmerica Region.

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.

With the resignation of Nathan Brown, we need to have a volunteer to take over as Treasurer. We also need someone to step up to the President-Elect position. Worship Associates are also needed.

The networking in the church as been updated and new equipment has been purchased to allow us to do live stream services directly from the church. The church's website is updated regularly.

The "stay/go questions to consider" document developed by Dr. Rev. Claudia Hall will be sent out via email. If you did not receive the document, contact [Mary Johnson](#).

The proposed budget was approved unanimously.

If anyone wants the complete minutes of the meeting, please let Mary Johnson know.

A/V Tech Job Opening

The First Unitarian Church of St. Louis is seeking an A/V Technician to help them utilize and integrate audio and visual technology into their in-person and virtual services. To learn more, go to <https://www.firstuustlouis.org> for a full job description and information on how to apply.

4th Saturday Personal Care Distribution



On August 28 we'll need 3 volunteers who have completed their vaccination regimen, to assist with this monthly community outreach program. Volunteers need to

arrive at 10:30 a.m. and can leave when we close at 12:30 p.m.

We had 18 people come by for products in July. It may be several months until the word gets out that we're open again, and the attendance builds up to the 50-70 we were having prior to Covid. Thanks to Mary Lu McManus, Nancee Magilson, and Nathan Brown for their help in July.

Financial donations are especially welcome and as we get back to coming to church, product donations (e.g., toilet paper, free and clear laundry detergent, body wash, dish detergent) are really appreciated. A donation of CONDOMS would be a good addition as our supply has almost been used up. A popular item!!!

If you can volunteer on August 28 email [Mary Johnson](#).

CHURCH LEADERSHIP as of August 2021 2021 – 2022 church year

Due to other commitments [Nathan Brown](#) has had to step down as Treasurer. He will be serving as the Board liaison to the Building and Ground Committee

Board Members

President: Robyn Berkley
robynberkley@yahoo.com

Secretary: Mary Johnson
mejohanson@mindspring.com

Treasurer: Position Open

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: Position Open

The next Church Newsletter deadline is August 26.
Send news items to [Mary Johnson](#).