

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

Newsletter of the

First

Unitarian
Church

Alton, Illinois

110 East 3rd Street (location)

PO Box 494 62002 (mail)

Office phone: 618-462-2462

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

September 2021



Photo by Michael Tarabulski
Congregation established 1836.



There will be NO INPERSON SUNDAY SERVICES at church until further notice. Only those directly involved in putting on the service (i.e., the speaker, worship associate, pianist, and the tech team) can be in the church. Services will stream at 10 a.m. on YouTube at the church's homepage or <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSx-6KMgYdgy1zktuaPUTIQ>

The Zoom Coffee Hour follows almost immediately after the service
(no matter whether the service lasts 30 minutes or an hour).

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88505584363?fbclid=IwAR0hRmxfn2ZSIo-U98VWOyq9-uXvxlkhIPC7nTK7YqfGa_u6v6ilbcknr5g

Passcode: 641343

September 5 – 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Paula Moore

Worship Associate: Robyn Berkley

Title: *“The Power of Unconditional Love”*

September 12 – 10 a.m.

Speaker: Annie Girresch

Worship Associate: Robyn Berkley

Title: *The Heretic Gospels of Mary Magdalene*” -
enlightening us to feminist perspectives of faith!

Annie Girresch is the Program Coordinator at **Faith & For the Sake of All**. She is an Ecumenical minister, End of Life Doula, Spiritual Companion.

Faith & For the Sake of All (FFSOA) addresses racial inequity in St. Louis through facilitation of Mobilizing the Faithful (MTF) workshops with area faith/conscience groups. Its mission is “To deepen the understanding of and response to disparities in health and well-being between African American and White St. Louisans and foster discussion on why it matters to all of the St. Louis community.”



**September 19
– 10 a.m.**

The service of songs and music will be presented by -

“The Troubadours of Divine Bliss.”

Aim Me and Renee share a mutual vision as traveling musicians who inspire revolution of the spirit and courage of the heart. Following their bliss and freeing their dream, they picked up a guitar and an accordion and moved to New Orleans to become Troubadours of Divine Bliss. They started as street performers in the French Quarter and have since toured all over America, Canada, Scandinavia & Europe- including the International Festival of Music where they were chosen to represent the United States.

Worship Service Statistics

From July 4 through August 22 we’ve held 8 worship services. Two were off grounds (SIUE Dome and Moose Lodge). Four were in-person at church with safety precautions in place. Two were “hybrid” services with only the people involved with the service at the church. The average attendance (either in-person or virtual or hybrid) was 50.

President’s Column

We begin anew! Another year ahead of us at church! As many of you know who attended our annual meeting, we are on the path to finding a solution for our church to either make it accessible for our congregants or looking beyond for other options. This is hard work...this is emotional work...but it is necessary work. Financially, we are stable right now, but if/when we can finally return to in-church services, we may be looking at more financial challenges. Our task force is open to anyone who wants to participate, even though it is being driven largely by the Board. Please come...please share your voice and your ideas and your opinions...we'll be keeping you all updated on our progress.

As we approach In-Gathering, my focus this year is on COMMUNITY...how we can work better as a community...help our community...and continue to walk our UU Values. We are looking for a greater presence in the pulpit of more professional ministerial staff to bring more ideas and perspectives to our congregation! I am excited for what is ahead of us for worship. We are also looking to set up an RE program sometime this Fall. We are looking to hire someone soon and have begun advertising.

Despite COVID, I am grateful for the many folks who have continued to keep their commitment to First UU and have continued to support through their time, talent, and treasure to keep us viable and alive. We are focusing on keeping people safe, hence we have reverted to virtual services for the time being. We appreciate your cooperation while we move forward in uncharted territory. We have



**September 26 – 10 a.m.
Speaker: “Mother Jones”**

(a.k.a. Loretta Williams)

Worship Associate:
Mary Johnson

Title: “*Labor Wars: The Untold Story*”

Loretta will be spending the Labor Day weekend in West Virginia portraying

Mother Jones at several mining towns where they are remembering the 100th anniversary of the war between the mine owners and the laboring miners over fairer wages, safety, and justice. Similar to the issues still today.

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.

grown a bit with a few new faces in the church...I hope we can continue to grow and worship together!

Over the next few months, look for information on conversations to learn how to build a right relationship covenant and for how to have difficult conversations as a congregation. Once we understand these issues, it will be a lot easier for us to have the tough conversation about what to do about our church building and church finances. One step at a time. Please join us in those activities so we can take the right steps to help our church thrive now and into the future!

As we begin this new year together as a congregation, I send you peace, love, light, and blessings! We are approaching our 200th anniversary (a few years off but it is looming). My hope is that we can do the work necessary so we can be here for another 200 years...sharing the light of commitment, justice, and love to all we touch!

Love and Light, Robyn

Social Gatherings



Anna Ds Thursday, Sept. 2

At our August meeting we discussed being very cautious in our meeting locations given the increasing presence

of the Delta variant of COVID-19. For us that means outdoor locations for the near future (and maybe longer?).

Given that conversation, Mary Weber made a reservation for us at **Sugo's in Edwardsville** since our recent meeting there went well (and easily). We will meet there for lunch at 11:30 a.m. on **Thursday, September 2** (masks are required) (<http://sugosspaghetteria.com/>). We will be eating outside. Sugo is located at the Dierbergs Edwardsville Crossing Center, 243 Harvard Dr. RSVP to [Sandy Shaner](#) (by email or by phone) by Tuesday, August 31.

Men's Group Lunch Meeting Thursday, Sept. 9



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](#).

Building and Grounds

(1) Security Cameras have been installed at five locations around the church building. They were put in place by a technician from "Mr. Handyman" based on schematics developed by Nathan and Alex.



(2) The major weed patches in the back yard have been cut down and the overgrowth in RE yard is getting attention from Grassley's lawn service.

(3) The informational kiosk in the front of the church needs repair, repainting, or removal. Possibly a mobile kiosk could be put in its place.

Church Board News

Financials: As of the August Board meeting (8/9/21) \$11,430 had been received from pledges. Our net operating income was at \$18,548.

The Board will actively monitor the number of covid cases in the area to make decisions regarding in-person services. It was agreed that for now services would be hybrid. Only those directly involved with the service will be in the building (i.e., the speaker, worship associate, pianist, and tech team). The service will be live streamed and available for viewing later on video.

There was a zoom meeting on August 19 for anyone who wanted to participate in an open discussion of the "stay / go" questionnaire prepared by Rev. Claudia Hall and had been distributed to the membership.

If you have something you want the Board to discuss at its next zoom meeting on Monday evening, September 13, please contact [Robyn Berkley](#).

Welcome to our Newest Church Board Member!!

Jennifer Lewis has agreed to serve as a “Member at Large” on the Church Board. Her contact information is jenniferkaylewis@gmail.com.

4th Saturday Personal Care Distribution

Due to the increased cases of COVID in our area, the 4th Saturday distribution was cancelled in August, and it may or may not happen in September. Volunteers will be needed if we are able to do the distribution on September 25.

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.

The next Church Newsletter deadline is **September 24**.
Send news items to [Mary Johnson](#).

JOB AD: Religious Education Coordinator

The First Unitarian Church of Alton, Illinois is actively seeking a part-time Religious Education Coordinator familiar with both virtual and in-person teaching. This individual will be responsible for implementing a curriculum plan for a single-classroom, multi-aged program with the class being offered two Sundays each month.

Currently this is a 20-hour-per-month position at \$17.00 per hour. The expectation is that the individual in this position would have approximately 5 hours of direct student contact per month, with the remaining hours devoted to planning, training, and program development.

Candidates must be knowledgeable about Unitarian Universalism and/or have experience teaching either in religious education or in a K-12 setting. Preference will be given to candidates who are Unitarian Universalists. Candidates must be able to pass a background check.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. The position will begin upon hire for a start no earlier than September 2021.

Please send your resume and cover letter describing your qualifications and why you are interested in this position to jobs@firstuualton.org.