

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

Newsletter of the  
**First  
Unitarian Church**  
Alton, Illinois  
110 East 3<sup>rd</sup> St. (location)  
PO Box 494 62002 (mail)



Congregation established 1836.



**December 2021**

We will be returning to live services in the sanctuary starting on December 5, allowing the congregation to join worship in person or virtually. The live service will be available on our YouTube channel.

We request that anyone coming to the service at church be vaccinated. Masks will be required to be worn at all times while you are in the building, pew spacing will be in place, hand sanitizer will be provided, and you will be asked to sign-in for contact tracing. HEPA filters will be placed on the platform to further capture airborne contaminants. The Zoom Coffee Hour follows at 11 a.m. from [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88505584363?fbclid=IwAR0hRmxfn2ZSIo-U98VWOyq9-uXvxlkhIPC7nTK7YqfGa\\_u6v6ilbcknr5g](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88505584363?fbclid=IwAR0hRmxfn2ZSIo-U98VWOyq9-uXvxlkhIPC7nTK7YqfGa_u6v6ilbcknr5g) Passcode: 641343

Note that a service is planned for Christmas Eve at 7 p.m. and NO SERVICE on Sunday, December 26.

## 10 a.m. WORSHIP SERVICES FOR DECEMBER

### December 5

**Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall**

**Title: "Is Hannukah just the Jewish Christmas?"**

Looking at the rededication of sacred space as we open in person again. She is planning to weave in the Hanukkah theme of rededication with the reopening.

**Worship Associate: Jerry Johnson**

### December 12

**Speaker: Tracey Howe-Koch**

**Title:**

**Worship Associate:**

### December 19

**Speaker: John Herndon**

**Title: "Christmas is for Humanists too!"**

*A Universal season of new life and Love"*

**Worship Associate:**

**CHRISTMAS EVE VESPERS  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24  
at 7 p.m.**

**Speaker: Robyn Berkley**

**Worship Associate: Paula Moore**

Please come join us for Christmas Eve Vespers! We will gather in the church at 7 p.m. Paula Moore and Robyn Berkley will take us on a journey to understand the holiday season and Christmas through the eyes of paganism, mysticism, and the Christmas story as told in the Bible.



For those who are interested in sharing, we will host a cookie exchange! Because we are going to be wearing masks, food and drink are not really an option for the evening, but we'd like people to share in the joy of Christmas cookies. Each person who wishes to participate should make and then bag up 4-6 cookies to be shared with others. Bring the cookies pre-bagged. People can then exchange bags of cookies to take home. We look forward to seeing you on 12/24!

**DECEMBER 26 – NO WORSHIP SERVICE**

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings my friends... I am thrilled we will be back at church on the 5th! I remain optimistic we can do this safely and I think everyone is ready to feel connected, especially during this Holiday season. Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Solstice, Christmas ...!!

I want to thank everyone for pulling their weight this year. People have stepped up to the plate to volunteer and push themselves yet again out of their comfort zone to keep our church afloat! I know it was wonderful to be able to lean on all of you when my father was hurt and then later passed away. Knowing we have each other's back is so important to this community.

No new news about the embezzlement case. Once we hear back from the State's Attorney, I'll keep you posted. I also want to send out love and good thoughts to Mary Lu McManus' family. She was loved by our church community and will be missed greatly.

We still need your help with volunteering and have a tough few months ahead of us as we tackle the stay or go decision for our church! For now, thank you! Happy Hanukkah, Blessed Solstice, Merry Christmas and have an amazing New Year. We welcome 2022 with open arms for a glorious and exciting new year!

Love and Light ... Robyn

We will be decorating the church Christmas Tree after the service on December 5. Plan to stay and join in the fun.



### Social Gatherings



**Anna Ds**  
**Thursday, December 2,**  
**11:30 a.m.**

The *Anna D. Sparks Women's Alliance* will meet at **Castelli's Restaurant**, 3400 Fosterberg Road, Alton, IL.

We are saddened by the sudden death of one our beloved members, Mary Lu McManus.

We are asking that anyone attending our group luncheons be fully vaccinated or have had a negative COVID test no more than 3 days prior to the meeting. Masks of course are required to enter the restaurant and while moving around inside.

RSVP to [Sandy Shaner](#) (by email or phone) by Monday, November 29.

**Men's Group Lunch**  
**Gathering**  
**Thursday, December 9,**  
**11:30 a.m.**



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](#).



### Mary "Lu" Lucille McManus

Alton - Mary Lucille "Lu" McManus passed away Sunday, November 14, 2021, at her home in Alton.

Mary Lu was a loving daughter, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend. She will be missed by family and friends.

Mary Lu's adventurous free spirit, love of the outdoors, her creativity, and the love she gave to her family and friends is what made her unique. Traveling was Mary Lu's passion, taking her all over the world. She enjoyed nature, whether through hiking, canoeing, kayaking, or camping with family and friends. Her love of nature was passed down to her family.

She graduated from Alton High School and went to college at Western Illinois University and earned her Bachelor's Degree from Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville. She retired from South Roxana Schools as a Sixth Grade English and Math teacher. After retiring, her teachings took her to Chongqing, China, where she taught the English language.

Mary Lu was always embarking on a new adventure, such as joining the New Horizons Band, playing the Alto Saxophone to encompass her love of music. She was always taking classes to further her education and explore her many interests such as, the study of Healing Touch, meditation, the research of her heritage and much more. She passed down the love of reading to her children and grandchildren. Mary Lu was known for her wonderful pieces of art, whether it was sewing, jewelry designs, needle point, drawings, paintings, knitting or crocheting. Her creativity was centered through her daily walks, meditation, and Yoga.

Mary Lu was the daughter of James Jay and Martha (Shea) McManus. She is survived by her daughter Elizabeth (Daniel) Meyer, her son Jonathan Seibold, her grandchildren Holly and Lucas Seibold, her sister Martha Kane, her nephews Zachary (Joni) Kane, Grant (Meghan) Kane, Evan (Emily) Kane and great niece and nephews and her grand-dog Miley. She was preceded in death by her parents, her former husband, James Seibold and her brother-in-law, J. Michael Kane.

Memorials may be made in honor of Mary Lu McManus to the Boys and Girls Club of Alton, IL. Gent Funeral Home in Alton is in charge of arrangements. Online guestbook and information may be found at [www.gentfuneralhome.com](http://www.gentfuneralhome.com)

Published by The Telegraph on Nov. 17, 2021.

## December 18 - Personal Care Distribution



Since the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday in December is on Christmas Day, we're moving our monthly personal and household care distribution to Saturday, December 18. Donations

of toilet paper, men's socks, wash cloths, and baby wipes would be especially appreciated. Or you can make a financial donation by mailing a check, or through Givelify, noting it is for 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday distribution. Your product contributions, financial support, and volunteerism are the only things that keeps this community outreach program going.

We'll need two volunteers to help with the distribution. Please let [Mary Johnson](#) know if you can help on Dec. 18 from 10:30 to 12:15.

Twenty-five adults and two children came for products in November. Thanks to Paula Moore, Robyn Berkley and her mom, Pat, for their help on Nov. 27.

## OASIS Christmas Gifts



Every year our church helps families associated with the Oasis Women's Center have a happier Christmas. This year we are sponsoring a mother and two children. The Oasis staff asks us to give the family gift cards instead of wrapped gifts.

[Nancee Magilson](#) is coordinating our church's efforts and will be purchasing the gift cards. If you have questions, please contact her. You can donate by mailing a check to the church (made out to First Unitarian Alton) with the notation Oasis Christmas, or contribute through the Givelify app on our website, noting your donation is for Oasis. The gift cards need to be at the Oasis Center by December 15, so please make your contribution now.

## Board Meeting Notes – November 8, 2021

There was no quorum so no motions or votes could be made. Pledge reminders will be sent out soon.

Forty percent of those who pledged have yet to give anything.

New data shows that \$35,443.39 was embezzled. This is an increase from the initial report.

## 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.

## CHURCH CONTACTS 2021- 2021

### Board Members

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

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

Treasurer: Open

President Elect: Open

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: Jennifer Lewis  
[jenniferkaylewis@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferkaylewis@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)

Office Support: Nancee Magilson  
[nmagilson@hotmail.com](mailto:nmagilson@hotmail.com)

Building and Grounds: Michael Tarabulski  
[madtparty@uwalumni.com](mailto:madtparty@uwalumni.com)

Custodial: Hedda Kirk [hthrkirk@gmail.com](mailto:hthrkirk@gmail.com)

AV Tech Team: Alex Hoeft & Ken Hoeft  
[alex.j.hoeft@gmail.com](mailto:alex.j.hoeft@gmail.com); [kfhoeft@gmail.com](mailto:kfhoeft@gmail.com)

Music: Joy Hoeft [kjabhoeft@gmail.com](mailto:kjabhoeft@gmail.com)

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