

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

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

Office phone: 618-462-2462  
<https://www.firstuualton.org/>

**October 2022**



Photo by Jennifer Lewis

**Welcome to church!! We hope to see you in person this month.**

**For the time being we ask that you still wear a mask and continue to practice social distancing while at church. For those at home, the worship service will be streamed at 10 a.m. on YouTube (or Click “Virtual Services”) on the church’s homepage <https://www.firstuualton.org>.**

**10 a.m. WORSHIP SERVICES  
For October**

**October 2**

**Speaker: Robert Kokenyesi**

**Title:** *"Unitarian Postcards from Transylvania:  
Thus Far the Lord has Helped Us."*

**Summary:** This sermon explores how setting up markers of our victories can elevate generations and instill hope in their hearts.

The sermon, translated from Hungarian by Robert, was written in 2019 on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Dávid Ferenc (Francis Dávid). The minister who gave the sermon was Racz Norbert Zsolt, the minister of the Hungarian Unitarian Church of Kolozsvár. For translations of additional Unitarian sermons from Transylvania go to Robert’s webpage <https://unitariantorch.com>

**October 9**

**Speaker: Robyn Berkley**

**Title:** *"Push Me Pull You: Holding Conflicting Ideas in Our Heads and Hearts"*

**October 16**

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

**Title:** *"Reimagining the narrative: why the ancient holiday of Sukkot matters for UUs"*

**October 23**

**Speaker: Rev. Krista Taves**

**Title:** *"Belonging Ourselves out of Loneliness"*

It is often said that humans in the world’s rich countries are getting lonelier and lonelier. There is a deep and sometimes desperate yearning for authentic connection and community. And yet, we often get in our own way because belonging means changing how we see ourselves and what gives us a sense of worth and meaning.

(October 23 continued)

We will have a pot-luck lunch following the service. Please bring something to share.

From 12:00 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. the last session of the Starting Point series will be held in-person at the church.

**October 30**

**Speaker: Rev. Krista Taves**

**Title:** “*The Courage to Live Wide Awake*”

There is so much that is not right in the world. There are times we need to shelter in place. But we aren't meant to stay sheltered. It takes courage to live wide awake to the reality of our world and what it asks of us.



Our new RE program begins October 2. Carol McGrew is the grade-school RE teacher. The

curriculum chosen is “*Holidays and Holydays*” which focuses on those holidays that lift up values that we as UU affirm, and also seeks to honor the diversity and particularity of cultural traditions while connecting with our UU identity.

Classes will meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of each month. The children (kindergarten age and older) will start in the sanctuary and after the “Story for All Ages” will be dismissed to attend their RE class. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays the children will remain in the sanctuary and quiet activity packets will be provided for them.

Nursery aged children may go directly to the nursery when arriving at church. Marcella Horvath is the nursery coordinator.

## Message from Our Minister - The Rev. Krista Taves



On Monday October 4th, the Congregational Caring Team and I will be hosting the first Listening Circle which is part of the Transition Plan that the congregation discussed on September 18th. In that meeting, the Board listened to you and incorporated your feedback into the Plan. Your feedback made the plan stronger. Thank you to everyone who participated. Thank you for your open hearts and open minds. Thank you for your honesty and your transparency. It gives me hope as I continue to learn and grow with you.

In the first two months, I have been visiting with many of you. Some of you have welcomed me into your homes, others have met with me in coffee shops and restaurants. Some of you have emailed me. I've had some great phone conversations with you. I am ready and open to meet everyone who wishes to have some time to connect. If you want to see me, please don't hesitate to reach out to [revkristataves@gmail.com](mailto:revkristataves@gmail.com). I come into Alton 1-2 times a week on the weeks that I serve you. I'm happy to create time for us to get together. I'm also willing to meet by phone and zoom.

If you know of someone in long term care who you think I should visit, please let me know. I am building my regular visit list so that I make sure to regularly visit those who are unable to come to church and would like the connection. If you are in need of spiritual care for yourself, I am here for you. Let me know and we will make the time to meet.

The purpose of the Listening Circles is to create a space for you to regularly meet together and talk about your thoughts and feelings regarding the transition to a new home. This is a place to set aside business, decision making, the impulse to influence the outcome. This is a place for you to reflect on where you are at, and for everyone to listen to each other, to understand each other, and hopefully, to build trust with one another.

Some of you have spoken with me about past conflicts in the church. They sound very painful and many of you have been deeply impacted by them. It is likely that these feelings and memories will impact the transition process. These listening circles will hopefully be a place of safety and calm, where there is no need to respond to each other, to reason with each other, to try and change anyone's mind. You just have to be with each other.

I hope you give it a try. And please remember, like everything we are doing regarding the transition, this is a work in progress. We ask for your patience if this is a new experience for you. Give it a few tries before making any judgments. The Team and I are also always open to feedback about how to make this experience more meaningful.

If you're planning to join by zoom, the link and phone information is below.

Yours in faith and service,  
Rev. Krista.

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### Listening Circle

**Monday, October 3** at 7 p.m. the Congregational Caring Team will be holding our first Listening Circle. These circles will be held regularly through the transition time to give us an opportunity to listen and to hear each other. No decisions are made at these gatherings. They are not the place to influence or move things in a desired direction. This is a place to process our feelings and thoughts together - to share and to listen deeply. This will be a hybrid event, meeting in person at the church and online through zoom.



The Caring Team is Rev. Krista Taves, Dee Evans, Pat Moore, Wayne Politsch, and Carol McGrew.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88232143558?pwd=bmlSOU Z3dng3aHE5V0xCbWFLWlRndz09>  
Meeting ID: 882 3214 3558  
Passcode: 322904

To join by phone:  
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)  
Meeting ID/Passcode: same as above.

### REPORT FROM ROBYN BERKLEY Congregational President

Our congregational year is well underway! We are bringing back potluck in October, we had a lovely Ingathering in September, and the best part of it all...Children's RE starts in October and Adult RE is ongoing! We are rebuilding step by step and I couldn't be happier.

First, RE is set up right now for all grade levels broken down into Nursery, Elementary, and Youth Group (middle and high school). When kids show up in the Nursery, we have Marcella Horvath to support our children under 5. Carol McGrew will lead our elementary students. Our youth group kids will be supported by me and Pat Moore. In the Spring, we'll be offering OWL for our middle school aged kids, but it will be held at Immanuel Methods Church in Edwardsville. If you are interested, let Rev. Claudia know so we can send out notices later in the Fall to set up the schedule.

We are moving forward with our transition plan, working with a selling team, moving team, and caring team! This is all hands-on deck...we need everyone's voice and everyone's help...finding a place, sharing what you want/need in a new home, packing, supporting each other! We are a congregation which means we are in this together. Please consider donating some time, no matter how much, to support this important transition.

I am grateful for all of you! I love seeing more and more faces in the sanctuary...please consider joining us if you haven't been in a while!

Love and Light...Robyn

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## Would You Like to Learn More About Unitarian Universalism?

### Starting Point

with Rev. Krista Taves  
and Jennifer Lewis



This month, the **Starting Point** series which began in September will continue with two more sessions. The third session will be on Zoom and the fourth will be in-person at the church. New sessions will be offered sessions in winter and spring.

**Session 3, Monday, October 17, 6 - 7:45 pm on Zoom:** Our Journey Together – The Three Paths of Unitarian Universalism Part 1. On Zoom

**Session 4, Sunday, October 23, noon - 1:45 in person:** The Three Paths Part 2 and Finding Your Journey Group. In person at the church.

Please register by emailing [revkristataves@gmail.com](mailto:revkristataves@gmail.com) with "Starting Point Registration" in the subject line.

Rev. Krista Taves (she/her)  
First Unitarian Church of Alton IL



### Becoming a Member of this Church

If you've been attending services at First Unitarian of Alton for a while and have gotten to know some of the people here and believe that this church offers the kind of religious home and support for the spiritual journey that you are seeking, we invite you to consider membership in the church.

Signing the membership book in the presence of two Board members, is the first step, and then adding your spirit and presence by participating in the life of the church follows.

### Historical Note for October

In the fall of 1854, the members of the First Congregational Society of Alton (i.e., the Unitarians) purchased two lots of property at the corner of Alby and Third Streets and contracted with an architect and a construction company to build a church. The dedication of the church was celebrated in a community-wide event on October 14, 1855.



In 1903 the congregation decided to demolish the 1855 building and build a new church – our current church – on

the same property. This new church was dedicated on October 29, 1905 – fifty years after the original church was dedicated.

### Anna Ds Lunch

Thursday  
October 6  
11:30 a.m.



The *Anna D. Sparks Women's Alliance* meets on the first

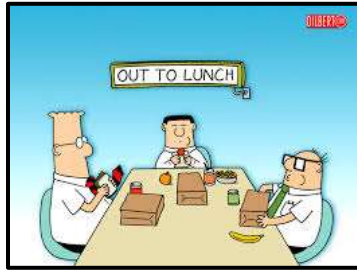
Thursday of each month, generally in the Alton-Edwardsville-Florissant area. All women in the church are invited.

**On October 6, the group will meet at My Just Desserts, 31 East Broadway in Alton**

RSVP by Thursday, September 29 to [Sandy Shaner](#)

Finally, a gentle reminder – we expect all those attending to be vaccinated and, best case, boosted.

**Men's Lunch  
Group  
Thursday,  
October 13  
11:30 a.m.**



The men's group will be meeting at a restaurant yet to be determined. An email will be sent out to the group.

If you're not already on the group's email list, contact [Paul Hebert](#),

I am in Alton on Sundays and can pick up any donations from your front porch. These items mean so much to our patrons.

To keep it simple, picking up multiples of one item on a grocery store or Dollar store run would be most appreciated.

You can also donate on the Givelify app for First Unitarian of Alton church, under Fourth Saturday contributions.

Feel free to contact me if you have donations and I will pick them up on Sundays, anywhere in the Riverbend area.

[PAULA MOORE](#)



**4<sup>th</sup> Saturday  
Distribution  
October 22  
10:45 – 12:15**

**FROM PAULA MOORE**

On Saturday, October 22 we will have our regular Fourth Saturday program at the church to distribute personal care items to those in need. Many of these items cannot be purchased with SNAP benefits.

In September, 37 individuals came by, supporting a total of 75 people. Individuals may choose 5 items from a list of 30+ products, plus everyone gets 2 or 3 rolls of toilet paper.

The following are needed for this program every month (new and unopened): Toilet paper, laundry detergent, bleach, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, body wash, bar soap, washcloths, toothbrushes, toothpaste, African American hair products, razors, shaving cream, hand wipes, baby wipes, diapers, incontinence products, tall kitchen trash bags, foot powder, lotion, sanitary products, condoms, spray cleaner, bathroom cleaner, paper towels, men's, women's and children's socks.

In October, and throughout the winter months, we will have a coat, hat, scarf, and glove drive (new or used, and clean).

**CHURCH CONTACTS**

**2022**

**Board Members**

President: Robyn Berkley [robynberkley@yahoo.com](mailto:robynberkley@yahoo.com)  
Secretary: Mary Johnson [mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com)  
Treasurer: Nancee Magilson [nmagilson@hotmail.com](mailto:nmagilson@hotmail.com)  
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)  
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**Building and Grounds:** Michael Tarabulski  
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**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)

**Rev. Krista Taves** – [revtristataves@gmail.com](mailto:revtristataves@gmail.com)

**Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall** – [dr.claudia.hall@gmail.com](mailto:dr.claudia.hall@gmail.com)

CHURCH BOARD APPROVES TRANSITION PLAN

In August, Rev. Krista Taves prepared a Transitional Plan Draft. The Plan was published in the newsletter and copies made available at church. On September 18, a congregational meeting was held to discuss the Plan. Feedback from the congregation was incorporated into the final form of the Transition Plan which was approved by the Board later in September by a unanimous vote.

**Transition Plan for First UU Alton  
Approved Unanimously by the Board via Email Voting  
between September 22, 2022 and September 27, 2022**

- 1) Recruit a Selling Team, a Moving Team, and a Congregational Care Team - one is responsible for selling the building, one is responsible for finding new accommodations, one is responsible for spiritual care of the leaders and members of the church. At least one member of each team must be a board member. Each team should include non-board members. The Board approves the membership of the Selling and Moving Teams. Rev. Taves determines the composition of the Congregational Care Team.
- 2) All Teams incorporate the covenant work and identity work that was done in preparation for the vote
- 3) Offer a live opportunity for the congregation to ask questions and offer feedback about this plan
- 4) Turn this document into a final version that is shared with the congregation and used as a guidepost to keep us on track. Amend as needed.

**Selling Team** - recruit a real estate agent (not a member of the congregation, someone neutral) to assist in selling the property, must have commercial real estate experience or resources in their immediate network with commercial experience - bring to board for approval - Determine whether the building has any value or if the value lies only in the property - If building has value, determine if any essential maintenance is needed or sell as is - Secure permanent easement of eastern boundary of property if needed - Gather important property paperwork...architectural plans, etc. - Investigate potential historical designation of building - Partner with individuals in the community who understand the power structure in the City of Alton - Following the lead of the real estate agent, begin to discern potential buyers, potential selling price, and when/if to go public with the sale listing. Potential selling price and market values will help determine if the Board needs to organize a Capital Campaign - Provide a report at the monthly board meeting, more frequently if necessary - Communicate regularly with Moving Team - Provide regular in person/zoom information sessions for the congregation with opportunity for questions and feedback. - Provide regular articles in the newsletter - Secure real estate lawyer to navigate the deal with potential buyer - If a buyer is found, bring the potential sale to the board. - The board negotiates the contract for sale with the attorney and brings to the congregation for approval - If the sale is approved, work with the Moving Team to organize the move - If the building does not sell, explore potentially leasing the building - understand all liabilities of being a landlord in Alton/Madison County.

**Moving Team** - Hold at least 2 in person/zoom sessions with the congregation to determine what the congregation needs in a future home i.e. # of seats in sanctuary, square footage of sanctuary, # of parking spots, accessibility, nursery, # of meeting rooms, classrooms, and offices, outdoor space, own/rent, share/sole occupancy, highway access, build our own space, etc. What is a must have, what is flexible? With these results, a new home profile can be built and be approved by the board. - Differentiate between what is needed for temporary space versus a permanent space - Secure a real estate agent to explore sole occupancy possibilities. Work directly with churches and not for profits for possible share (SIUE Dome, St. John's UCC, St. Paul's UCC, Immanuel Methodist, Newsong). Consider spiritual alignment if we plan to share space with another organization. - Work directly with the board regarding a budget - what are market rents, what are property values? What can you afford? What funding do you need to afford what you want? - Communicate regularly with the Selling Team - Provide a report at the monthly board meeting, more frequently if necessary - Declutter current building and prepare for move. Donate any relevant historical documents to SIUE or Madison County Historical Society. - Identify a temporary home and storage facility should the Selling Team secure a buyer before you find a new home - Ensure tax consequences of any decision is considered - Consider name change (e.g., DBA First Unitarian Church of the Metro-East) if we leave Alton, and any tax/legal paperwork needed to make that change - Provide regular in person/zoom sessions for the congregation with opportunity for questions and feedback - Provide regular articles in the newsletter - If a property is found, go to the board which will decide next steps, culminating in a congregational site visit and potentially a congregational vote - With Selling Team, coordinate the move.

**Congregational Care Team** - Led by Rev. Taves, built by Rev. Taves and the Board. - Purpose - to care for the congregation and hold us in covenant as we move through this transition - Hold regular listening sessions at intervals deemed most helpful. These are not work sessions. They are not to accomplish specific goals. They are for people to have a safe place to share what is happening for them through this journey - Care for the Leaders - Provide spiritual support to the Board, Moving Team and Selling Team - Incorporate congregational care into regular Sunday services - Work with leaders and congregation to determine whether something of the building can be taken, some recognized and significant item - e.g., a pane of stained glass, something from the sanctuary etc. - if possible - that can become a part of the new home - When the building is sold, prepare and offer a Letting Go Service to honor the memories and mission held in the building, which can include the significant item - Prepare and offer the final Sunday service in the building - Prepare and offer the first service in the new home, with ritual to consecrate the space and carry over the memories and the mission, including installation of the significant item.

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