

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

*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/>

November 2022

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.](https://www.firstuualton.org/)

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

November 6

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: *“Mindfulness and self-compassion: developing a spiritual tool kit for hard times”*

Summary: The news is grim, and our values are under attack. How do we, as a liberal religious minority, cultivate ways to be spiritually healthy in times of turmoil and fear?

[RE class session.](#)

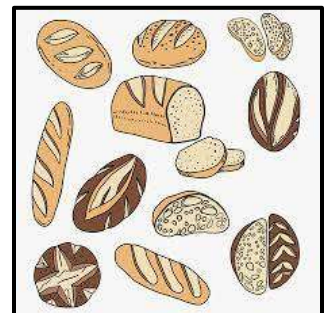
Daylight savings time ends – set clocks back

November 13

Speaker: Rev. Krista Taves

Title: *“Annual Bread Service”*

Summary: In Unitarian Universalist congregations across the country, the **Bread Service** is held on a Sunday before Thanksgiving. On this Sunday, everyone is invited to bring bread or baking that is special to them. It could be a family recipe,



something from your family's favorite bakery, or something you yourself really enjoy and appreciate! Some people make theirs from scratch, others buy something to bring. Everything is welcome. During the service, you are invited to come forward with what you brought, briefly share why it's important to you and/or your family, and leave your gift of food on the front table. After the service, we will share what we have brought to the table. You are welcome to participate whether you have just started attending or have come for years.

Conversation #2 of “Identifying Our Priorities” will start at 11:15 a.m. following the Nov. 13 service. It will be in-person and on Zoom. See more details on page 6 in this newsletter.

November 20

Speaker: Robyn Berkley

Title: To Be Announced

RE class session.

November 27

Speaker: To Be Announced



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 1st and 3rd 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 2nd and 4th Sundays the children will remain in the sanctuary and quiet activity packets will be provided for them.

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

Donating to the Church if you shop on Amazon.

If you go to smile.amazon.com you can select the First Unitarian Church of Alton as your charity to receive 0.5% of the amount of your purchases. It isn't a lot, but depending on how much you buy on Amazon it does mount up.

Holy Guacamole!

Taco Potluck is coming!

Saturday, November 12 at 6:00 p.m. at Church

This is a party for newcomers to the Alton Unitarian congregation as well as for longtime friends and members so we can build friendships and get better acquainted with each other.

The potluck supper will be a taco-bar along with a variety of desserts. There will be a signup sheet at church and also on UU Friends for you to let the planners know that you're coming and what potluck item you'll bring.

A fun evening is being planned with “people bingo” and board games (bring your favorite).

Children are welcome and there will be fun activities for them.

RSVP to [Mary Weber](#).

P.S. This is a BYOB event.

REPORT FROM ROBYN BERKLEY Congregational President

Greetings from Spain...am sitting waiting for a flamenco show to begin! It is my last night in Seville and my last stop is back in Madrid for 1 night then I fly home. It has been a glorious two weeks and am looking forward to getting back to the States and back to work!

I don't have much to add this month other than I encourage you all to continue to participate in our moving meetings and listening circles! ALL OF YOUR VOICES MATTER! We are a congregation, and it is you and your voices that always ring true!

See you on Sunday!

Amor y Luz,
Robyn



Message from Our Minister - The Rev. Krista Taves

This past Sunday (October 23) was a significant day for this congregation. We held the first congregational conversation to start identifying your priorities for a new home. This meeting involved a great deal of sharing and listening.

We began by offering everyone who gathered the opportunity to share their hopes for the meeting. People spoke of the desire for unity and greater clarity, the hope that the move would not be divisive, the desire to learn from each other, and that you would continue to be the church that you are - warm, welcoming, and inclusive.

We then broke into five groups, with each person having the opportunity to share their personal priorities for a new home. There was good conversation in all groups with people learning about each other, finding commonality, but also expressing differences.

Each group was given a sheet upon which to record the personal priorities of people in the group and half an hour to listen and share.

We regathered in the main sanctuary and each group's sheet was placed on the wall behind the pulpit.

The group as a whole began identifying the shared and differing priorities that emerged.

Accessibility was a shared priority across the groups, with accessibility being defined broadly. It included not just accessibility for those with mobility issues and adequate parking, but accessibility for a wide diversity of people including LGBTQ people and our children. There was much agreement on this point.

The differences focused on location and the type of facility. There was considerable energy and some anxiety around these questions.

There are members who feel that the church should remain in Alton. Other members feel that the church should move to a central location that is

more accessible from the major corridors. There are those in both groups who sincerely hope that regardless of the location chosen, the congregation will remain united.

The other area of difference focused on what type of facility is best for the church's next home. Will you construct a new building, rent a facility that is yours alone, share a facility with another organization like a church, or buy an existing property?

There was widespread agreement that the option chosen must be financially sustainable and hopes that a future home will be environmentally sustained. There was a shared conviction that any facility must provide the congregation with some control over its space, that its maintenance needs be low, and that there be outside green space.

As the end of the meeting came upon us, the hope was expressed to have more conversation. One meeting was not enough. You wanted more time to share, to listen to each other, and especially to focus on those areas that evoke both more energy and anxiety - the location and the type of facility. You also wanted an update from the Selling Team.

To that end, the next Congregational Conversation will be held on November 13th following our Bread Service. There will be a listening session on Sunday December 11th after coffee hour.

Thank you to those who participated in this discussion. I truly appreciated being able to hear and absorb what you care about and what your hopes are. I understand that some aspects of these conversations are difficult and cause anxiety. It takes courage to express what we want and to hear what others want when it highlights differences, especially when there has been so much loss. My hope and prayer is that we can continue these difficult conversations in the spirit of love, a desire to understand, and from the conviction that we are called to live out our Unitarian Universalist principles in all that we do. If we do this, then wherever this church makes its home is the right place.

With gratitude and respect for who you are,
Rev. Krista.

Flip Charts from the Identifying Our Priorities Meeting of October 23rd

What is your hope for this meeting?

- Unity & Connection
- Good Idea Seeking
- Open Mind & Learning
- Agreement on priorities (hope all line up)
- Clarity
- Keep being warm, welcoming and inclusive
- what does it mean to be a church?
- We remain and not to split

• feels included in this conversation

1 Location ☺ - Centralized

Group 1

2 Accessible & 3 Low maintenance (good condition) - or maintenance person

4 Storage Space

5 Size

Wider bar room-ish or bigger

Group 2

Outdoor Space
Flowers, Pretty Lighting
Location
Owned ~~site~~ property
Rented Property
Shared Space
Place to grow
Accessibility
"Church" feeling
Colorful
Stained glass
Light (Natural) in Sanctuary
RE Rooms, Nursery
Kitchen
Parking
Ease of Maintenance
Clear contract regarding autonomy

Maybe a residence house
Good Relationship
Big

Location
Accessibility/Barley
Financial Considerations
Ambiance
Needed "spaces"

Accepting Community
Environmentally Safe
Meeting Space
Flexibility in time of service

Escalator
Elevator
Good Acoustics in Sanctuary
Minimal Religious Symbols
Financial Considerations

Group 3

Side note
Moving team should tour other places to see how they solved these problems

Green Space
Accessibility
Healthy Space (Mold, asbestos, ect.)
Encourages active participation by EVERYONE
Flexibility of use
Storage Space (kitchen, RE, decor, ect.)
Working Kitchen
Sink in nursery
Autonomy and control over space
Highway access
commute time

Group 4

Within sight of Miss River
Location, Loc, Loc

Remain in Altan, important for community Social justice History

Full Accessibility Not on a hill Being open-minded

Distance Closer to her home

Stay in Altan

What do we need?

- Accessible to all
 - Parking
 - Entrance/Exit
 - pulpit on flat ground
 - ramps
- Environment
 - air quality
 - building condition
 - space for RE
 - space for fellowship
 - outdoor space
 - working kitchen
 - aesthetically pleasing
- Low maintenance
- Financially Sustainable

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Accessibility

- parking - No long distance to walk
- No steps or stairs
→ ramp access (strollers, wheelchairs, walkers)
- All floors accessible by everyone.
- ADA compliant restrooms (minimum)
- Accessibility for all ages
- All gender restrooms
- Covered drive through access to entrance

~~_____~~

Own or control our own space - We don't want to feel like guests in our space.

Access to Kitchen and fellowship area

Rooms beyond worship space

- office(s)
- classrooms
- storage
- nursery

Location - proximity to other churches and population density

Facility

- own
- shared

Economic/Financial Stability

- (solo) rent
- Building a new place

Identifying Our Priorities – Congregational Conversation #2 –

After Conversation #1, the congregation wanted to have additional opportunities to share, to listen to each other, and especially to focus on those areas that evoke both more energy and anxiety - the location and the type of facility. They also wanted an update from the Selling Team. So, the second conversation has been scheduled for Sunday, November 13. You are encouraged to attend in person or on Zoom.

Sunday, November 13 starting at 11:15. In person and on Zoom -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88505584363?fbclid=IwAR1BWlhErQw4GHyL2M7PdefW8RtUi47rbQHSrplPIAphpzHV78Cv5XrKd84>

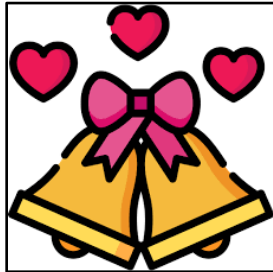
Meeting ID: 885 0558 4363

Passcode: 641343

Or on UU Friends on Facebook go to the **Featured** tab and click on the blue Zoom button.

Coffee Hour Celebration!

Jessie Dominick and Marcella Horvath Dominick will be hosting a special Coffee Hour on November 6 in celebration of their October 31, 2022, wedding.



CONGRATULATIONS TO
JESSIE AND MARCELLA.



**Potluck
Thanksgiving Meal
at Church
Thursday,
November 24**

**The social time begins at noon.
The meal will be served around 1:00 p.m.
Hosted by Carol McGrew**

**(Continued on the next column)
Please join for food and “family.”**

Carol writes, “*More than a decade ago I started having friends over for Thanksgiving meal. Many were unable to attend their Bio family's celebration because of their sexual orientation. Others lived too far away to travel. They became my Family! When I joined UU Alton Church I asked if I could use the space to hold my Thanksgiving because my apartment was too small to accommodate my growing Family. I was told yes and asked if members of the Church could also attend... of course I said Yes!*”

There is a sign-up sheet on the buffet at church. Come alone or bring a group. Carol will roast the turkey, make mashed potatoes, and pumpkin pies.

Please bring side dishes and desserts!

In addition, on Wednesday, November 23, there will be a **Night Before Thanksgiving Hangout at church** hosted by Carol. It will start at 6:00 p.m.

Drop by to say Hi, or hangout and play cards/games while Carol defrosts the turkey and bake a Pumpkin Pie! Cards, Games, and Snacks provided.

Anna Ds Lunch

**Thursday
November 3 @ 11:30**

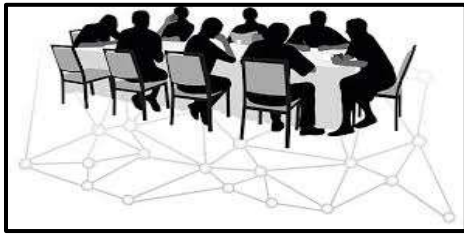
The *Anna D. Sparks Women's Alliance* meets on the first Thursday of each month, generally in the Alton-Edwardsville-Florissant area. All women in the church are invited.



On October 3, the group will meet at Fazzi's in Collinsville. www.fazzis.com

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,
November 10
11:30 a.m.

Unless otherwise notified, the men's group will be meeting at the Best Buffet Grill (Asian Cuisine) 615 Wesley Dr. In Wood River.

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

Building and Grounds

Water has been our nemesis over the last months.

The basement has flooded several times. Thanks to Michael and Nathan and whoever else came in to mop up each time. Often after a rain, water comes up through cracks in the asbestos floor tiles or fills up in the window wells and leaks in, or seeps in through the walls which are partially underground. More recently it seems that rainwater may be backing up due to crumbling clay pipes under the building which keeps the water from flowing out to the street connectors and may be coming back up through the downstairs toilets. We don't quite understand this.

In addition, we have had 2 water bills in the last 6 months of around \$500 due to leaks and toilets that didn't shut off. We have closed the two downstairs restrooms with "do not use" signs in hopes that this will help. We have had plumbers come several times to try to remediate some of our water issues.

More recently – during the rain several days ago – Aiden discovered that there was water coming through the ceiling in the Wuerker Room and put a large trash can under the leak. Thanks to Robyn's contacts, Ed Halvorson from Cardinal Catastrophe

Services came in on Wednesday and inspected the roof. He discovered a crack in the roof at the point where the sanctuary roof and the Wuerker Room roof meet. He filled in the crack with a silicon compound, saying that this repair should fix the problem ... and he didn't charge us anything.



Crack at roof juncture
10-26-22.

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.



Personal and Household Care Distribution
Saturday
November 19

10:45 – 12:15

Due to the Thanksgiving Holiday the 4th Saturday distribution this month will be on the 3rd Saturday.

On October 22nd, we served 27 individuals, representing 57 people in their households. Our next Fourth Saturday will be the morning of November 19th. Big thank you to Carol McGrew and her sister Ronda, as well as Mary (who has been doing the shopping but is retiring from this after November shopping) and Jerry Johnson, who have all consistently supported this program with their time and efforts. Honorable mentions, too, for Melanie and Laura Russell who volunteered in September.

Please consider contributing products, funds, or labor for this important community service, so our fellow community members in need can keep themselves and their homes clean with products that are not available on the SNAP program. It is a short service commitment, requiring about two hours on a Saturday morning. If we have more volunteers, we can also provide something warm to drink to our patrons, which will be especially appreciated during the colder months. Sometimes we have had cookies, etc., to serve.

We are still collecting new and gently used and *clean*: coats, hats, scarves, and gloves which will be available to our patrons as well.

You may contribute monetarily through the Givelify app under our church's name, for the Fourth Saturday program. Donations of toilet paper, laundry detergent, bleach, body wash, razors (non-gendered if possible) are especially requested. Dollar Tree has the best prices.

Thank you all! Paula Moore

Notes from the October 19 Board Meeting

Pledges received to date total \$31,987. The pledge goal for the church year (ending in June 2023) is \$65,020. Pledge reminders will be sent out before the end of 2022

The Board approved a motion to once a month, give all cash offerings (unless otherwise designated) to

the Minister's Discretionary Fund. The specific Sunday is still to be determined.

Rev. Krista reported that the Alton/Eliot "Starting Point" series will have its last session on Oct. 30. Five people from the Alton church were enrolled in the first three sessions.

All persons involved in working with children will need to have a background check. Buddy will send out the link for that.

There is concern about the abundant overgrowth along the sides of the church and in the church gardens.

The next Board meeting will be November 9 at 6:15 on Zoom.

CHURCH CONTACTS

2022-2023

Board Members

President: Robyn Berkley robynberkley@yahoo.com

Secretary: Mary Johnson mejohanson@mindspring.com

Treasurer: Nancee Magilson nmagilson@hotmail.com

President Elect: Open

Member at Large: Aiden Crist arexboi@gmail.com

Member at Large: Alex Hoefl alex.j.hoefl@gmail.com

Member at Large: Jennifer Lewis

jenniferkaylewis@gmail.com

Member at Large: Carol McGrew

carol_mcgrew@yahoo.com

Member at Large: Pat Moore patjimmoore@charter.net

Office Support: Nancee Magilson

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Building and Grounds: Michael Tarabulski

madtparty@uwalumni.com

Custodial: Hedda Kirk hthrkirk@gmail.com

AV Tech Team: Alex Hoefl & Ken Hoefl

alex.j.hoefl@gmail.com / kfhoefl@gmail.com

Music: Joy Hoefl kjabhoefl@gmail.com

Rev. Krista Taves – revtristataves@gmail.com

Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall – dr.claudia.hall@gmail.com

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