

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

## Newsletter of the First Unitarian Church

Alton, Illinois

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



## December 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 December

#### December 4

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.

#### December 11

Speaker: Rev. Krista Taves

Title: “Wonder as a Path to Liberation”

Summary: We are in the season of wonder, surrounded by the lights of the holidays as the earth appears to go dormant. And yet, life continues to pour from the earth, into us, and back, an unending circle of mutual renewal. It is, indeed, wondrous, and it can and does free us.

- This morning’s undesignated offerings will go into the Minister’s Discretionary Fund to help those in need.
- Potluck Lunch to follow the service. Please bring something to share.

#### December 18

Speaker: Robyn Berkley

Title: TBA

- RE class session

#### December 24 (Christmas Eve Service) – 5 p.m.

Speaker: Rev. Krista Taves

Join us for our traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service. We will sing Christmas Carols, revisit the Christmas Story, and rejoice!

- Please bring cookies for the cookie exchange



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

We are officially in the Holiday Season. We are approaching Hannukah, Solstice, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and New Years. Although Christmas decorations are on the shelves earlier and earlier every year, the real feeling that we're in holiday time starts after Thanksgiving for me. I grew up in the Christian tradition, and after Thanksgiving is when I get out the Advent candles, drag out the Christmas CDs and DVDs, and start thinking about making cookies! My partner and I cut our tree at a tree farm outside Washington MO. We have a lovely collection of ornaments that we look forward to seeing again. I make sure that I have presents sent in time to reach my niece and 2 nephews in Ontario and Nova Scotia. When they were little, sometimes I would record a short video of me packing their presents and taking them to the post office. My brother would play the video before they opened the box.

This is the time of year when memories from my childhood are most vivid. We had so many rich traditions - baking from our heritage, rituals, choir rehearsals and special church services, and of course the full tables of food prepared by both my immigrant grandmothers who knew how to prepare a feast! My father's mother worked as a maid in her earlier years and her meals reflected that training. She made the best Christmas pudding! My mother's mother baked all the Mennonite favorites, including raisin stuffing (Bubbat), one of my favorites. Her desserts would fill a whole table!

Not everyone has good memories of this time. We come from a diversity of families - born and chosen - with differing levels of health. The holiday time can bring back memories that we have tried to set aside or remind us of the ways that our families of origin have pulled apart or become estranged from each other. If this is true for you, I hope and pray that you will find ways to take care of yourself, whatever that looks like. It could mean spending the holiday on your own and making it just a regular

day, nothing special. It could mean ensuring that your kids have good memories when they think of their childhood. You may lean into our faith. Our UU Principles affirm and promote your individual worth and dignity. You may do best by planning to share the special days with people you love and trust, who accept you as you are. Sometimes, you remake the traditions so that they are truly yours and reflect who you have become and want to be.

As we approach the end of the 2022, we can look back on this year with gratitude for all the blessings that came our way. We can recognize the hard things and see that we have been changed by them. Perhaps we've grown stronger or we need more time and support. We can take the time to remember everyone who loves us and those that we love.

This season is the time of new life and is reflected in the stories of the holidays. The Jewish people survived attempted genocide. A child was born that would bring new light into the world. Kwanzaa celebrates African American culture and history, and claims joy and love. New Year's helps to shed the old and anticipate the new.

My hope and prayer for each of us is that we receive the blessings of the season as best we can, that we offer our blessings back and that they are received, and that we rejoin in the New Year with hope, possibility and optimism, despite all the things that are not right with this world, maybe even in light of the all the things that are not right with this world.

May you be blessed in the coming with flourishing love.

**Yours in faith and service,  
Rev. Krista.**

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### December Hangouts with Rev. Krista

Rev. Krista hosts regular Hangouts to meet with people over coffee. Everyone is welcome. There is no need to RSVP. She is adding a Hangout in Edwardsville this month. Both locations are accessible.

Thursday December 8, 2 p.m. at Teaspoons Cafe, 2125 IL-157, Edwardsville, IL 62025.

Monday December 19, 4 p.m. at Post Commons Cafe, 300 Alby St, Alton, IL 62002. The accessible entrance is to the right of the main entrance.

### Transitions Support Group via Zoom



You are invited to the Transitions Support Group. 1st and 3rd Thursdays, 7 - 8:30 p.m., on zoom. **Rev. Krista** facilitates a regular drop-in support group for anyone experiencing a significant life transition and seeking connection and community. Significant life transitions include but are not limited to the death of a loved one, health issues, moving, being a caregiver, the end of a relationship, transitioning gender, and other life events that leave their mark. The group meets on zoom. We draw from the book, "*Transitions*" by William Bridges. Prior to the session, Rev. Krista will email the reading selection and a few focusing questions to help prepare for the session. **If you would like to join the mailing list, please email [revkristataves@gmail.com](mailto:revkristataves@gmail.com).**

### President's column:

Greetings friends and Happy Holidays! This year has flown but what a busy year it has been! I look back over the year and am heartened by the energy that is bubbling through the church. We've made some hard decisions with respect and support for everyone's feelings. We are back in the sanctuary on a consistent basis for the first time since March 2020 and it has felt good to be face to face in community. We hired an amazing minister in Krista Taves and continue to receive support from Claudia Hall for our RE program and supplementing in the pulpit. I am so grateful for our worship associates and all the hard work they have done to keep services afloat over the course of the pandemic. They are enjoying a well-deserved breather. We are enjoying coffee hour and potluck now and that sense of community means so much to me each week.

2023 is poised to continue to be a busy year as we continue the healing and discernment process for where we want our future home to be and what it should look like. Please stay involved...please let your voice be heard!

I wish you all a blessed holiday season ... Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Solstice ... you are all loved, and I appreciate each and every one of you for your continued support of the church's mission and to each other.

### Love and Light...Robyn





### **Selling Team Update from Nancee Magilson**

A local realtor has been contacted to assist in marketing the property when we are ready to take

that step. We are seeking resolution to a boundary issue on the eastern border (park side) of the property prior to taking the official step to list. Robyn is working with the City on issues related to the easement and boundary confirmation. Until we enter into a contract to sell, we are keeping announcement of our intent within the congregation.

Alton consistently has a number of old, unused churches. The realtor agrees that our property is unique because of its location and unparalleled river views. It is unlikely that the building would be used again as a church but could be an attractive venue for some other commercial use. Information on prices of historical properties in the vicinity purchased by a local investor has proven to be difficult to obtain since transactions are made through Limited Liability Corporations, not visible in the public record. The old post office (now Post Commons) was bought for \$235,000 in 2015. It was subsequently resold, but details are not readily available.

Seeking inclusion in the National Registry of Historic Places is time-consuming, involves extensive documentation to justify, and does not guarantee that the building would be protected from razing, so it not being pursued.

Mary Johnson has gathered together historical documents dating back to the 1800's should any of that be needed for selling. A local attorney will be engaged to represent the church as we move forward in the selling effort. The board agreed that some church artifact of historical significance, such as Anna Ds Bible, will be donated to the Alton Museum of History, reflecting our longstanding ties to this community.

If anyone has an interest in being part of the Selling team, please contact [Nancee Magilson](#).



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.

### **FYI - Overnight Warming Center in Alton**

The Overnight Warming Center provides a safe and warm place for unhoused neighbors on nights that are 20 degrees or colder. The center is completely run by volunteers from the community. Learn more about the center on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/OvernightWarmingCentersAlton](https://facebook.com/OvernightWarmingCentersAlton).

Overnight Warming Centers is a collaborative approach to addressing a critical need for persons experiencing homelessness during the coldest nights of the year. Although there are some existing day time warming shelter locations in our community, there are no places for our unhoused neighbors to go at night, except for the OWCA. As the only nighttime warming shelter, this organization is vital to our unhoused neighbor’s survival.





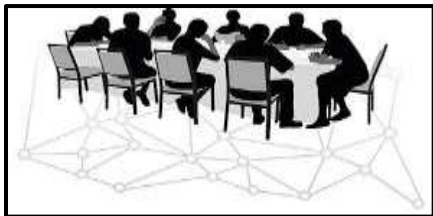
**Anna Ds  
Lunch  
Thursday  
December 1  
@ 11:30**

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 Thursday, December 1 the meeting will be held at:

**Alton Best Western Premier Hotel  
3559 College Ave  
Restaurant Great Rivers Tap & Grill  
618-462-1220**

Here's a link to the menu  
<https://greatriverstapandgrill.com/carryout-menu-restaurants-alton-il/> RSVP by Thursday, December 1 to [Sandy Shaner](#).

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



**Men's Lunch Group  
Thursday, December 8  
11:30 a.m.**

This month the men will meet at **Fazzi's Restaurant and Bar** in Collinsville.  
[www.fazzis.com](http://www.fazzis.com),  
1813 Vandalia St. Collinsville, IL.

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

## 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 December 17**

**10:45 – 12:15**

Due to the Christmas Holiday the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday distribution this month will be on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday.

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.

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](#)



Chalica is a week-long celebration of our [Unitarian Universalist Principles](#). The holiday [first emerged in 2005](#) out of a wish to have a holiday organized around Unitarian Universalist values.

Chalica begins on the first Monday in December and lasts seven days (December 5 – December 11, 2022). Each day, [a chalice](#) is lit and the day is spent reflecting on the meaning of that day's principle and doing a good deed that honors that principle. Not all Unitarian Universalists celebrate Chalica, but it has a growing following. There is a Chalica [Facebook page](#), [blog](#), and many Chalica-themed [videos on YouTube](#).

1. [1st Principle](#): The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. [2nd Principle](#): Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. [3rd Principle](#): Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. [4th Principle](#): A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. [5th Principle](#): The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. [6th Principle](#): The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. [7th Principle](#): Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

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## CHURCH CONTACTS

2022-2023

### 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)  
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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  
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**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)

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