

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

## Newsletter of the First Unitarian Church Alton, Illinois

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## January, 2023

Welcome to church!! We hope to see you in person this month.  
**NOTE THAT JANUARY 1 IS A "VIRTUAL ONLY" SERVICE.**

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 January 2023**

### January 1 – VIRTUAL ONLY

**Speaker: Robyn Berkley**

**Title:** "Embracing Possibility in Times of Change" – a sermon by UUA President Susan Frederick-Gray

**Summary:** "We know from these last several years the challenge, the loss, and the creativity and possibility of these transitional times. In liminal times, there's always a risk that fear and anxiety will dominate and lead people to cling more tightly to what has been." What does it mean for us as Unitarian Universalists to live as a people of hope and imagination—especially during in-between times? How can we challenge ourselves (and each other) to learn and grow in uncertain times?"

**Speaker: Dee Evans**

**Title:** "Making Room."

**Summary:** The burning bowl ritual is often thought of as a symbolic way to unburden ourselves of what we do not want in our lives. Rather, let us think of it as a way of making room for creative possibilities.

### January 15

**Speaker: Rev. Krista Taves**

**Title:** "Grace in the Midst of Struggle"

**Summary:** We will celebrate Martin Luther King Day by exploring the grace he offered in his ministry, the grace that was claimed after his passing, and the grace that can hold and center us as we ask, "What Now?"

**This Sunday's collection will go to the Minister's Discretionary Fund. The RE class will be held today.**

**January 8**

**January 22**

**Speaker: Rev. Krista Taves**

**Title:** “*Centering Our Bodies*”

**Summary:** We are still reorienting since Roe vs. Wade was struck down. We will explore the UU theological foundation of our commitment to abortion rights and what that asks of us now. **This service will be simulcast from Eliot Unitarian Chapel.** We will gather in the sanctuary to watch together and enjoy our fellowship time as always.

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**January 29**

**Speaker to be announced**



**This will be our Potluck Sunday. Please bring something to share. Starting Point Session 1 @ 2-4 p.m. on Zoom**

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

I have been a walker for a long time. When I lived in Toronto during my graduate studies, I walked everywhere to save money, and took public transit only when the weather was really bad, or the distance was too long. I just built walking into the ordinariness of my life.

Moving to suburban America changed that. I bought my first car and learned what it means to live in a car centric world. It was a rough landing. I first went to New Orleans where it often didn't feel safe to walk, then to Springfield MO where sidewalks were considered optional, and then to West St. Louis County. I began to understand that if I didn't walk, I wasn't well. I would get irritable and crabby, distracted and frustrated, depressed and anxious. Walking had to be a priority, not something I fit in when everything else was done.

When we bought our first house in St. Louis, one of the prime considerations was being close to walking trails. We bought a home that is surrounded by

parks. I can walk out my door and be on a trail in 5 minutes. I realize that I have incredible privilege to be able to do this. It takes being able to afford a car and a mortgage.

Walking is one of the primary ways I center my mind and my body. When I leave the house my mind will be filled with to-do lists and all the things that I need to do but haven't. My legs are often achy and tired, my knees hurt. But the longer I walk, the clearer things become. My mind slows down, my body loosens, my legs speed up, and by the time I get home I am in a different mindset. I feel comfortable in my body and in my spirit. Things seem possible again. This has become especially important as our country grows more culturally and politically divided, the radical right becomes more volatile and prone to violence, and the effects of climate change get clearer and more alarming. Getting right with my mind and spirit has become a survival tool in these difficult times.

All of us have those special things we do to find our center. It may be listening to music or singing, reading a great book, gardening, meditation, prayer, crafting, gaming, and much more. There are so many things that can get in the way of those special things. Work, school, health, the needs of family and friends, economic struggle, politics, even choices we ourselves make that end up standing between us and what we really need.

In Unitarian Universalism, the sacred lives as the spark of the divine in each living thing. To use the words of [Valarie Kaur](#), “Deep wisdom resides within each of us. Some call this voice by different sacred names—Spirit, God, Jesus, Allah, Om, Buddha-nature, Waheguru. Others think of this voice as the intuition one hears when in a calm state of mind. Whatever name we choose, listening to our deepest wisdom requires disciplined practice. The loudest voices in the world right now are ones running on the energy of fear, criticism, and cruelty. But I must not lose myself at the feet of others. My most vigilant spiritual practice is finding the seconds of solitude to get quiet enough to hear the Wise Woman in me.

Those special things that you need are not optional. They are always calming our minds and bodies so that we can become aware, again, of the spark of the divine that lives in each of us and of the wisdom that spark bears. As a people of faith, committed to justice, equity, and compassion in all our relations, self-care isn't just a frill, it's how to prepare ourselves for what is being asked of us in these times.

May you be well during the changing of the year. See you in 2023!

Yours in faith and service,  
Rev. Krista.

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### **Flood in Church Basement !!!**

As many of you may already know, some time between December 23rd and December 24th, we had a pipe burst in the basement. While we had taken all precautions during the cold snap, we forgot about the sink in the nursery. Unfortunately, due to the air flow through the building, even though the sink was in the middle and would have been in the warmest spot in the RE wing, there must have been cold air that leaked through to the space where the pipes are and that caused several spots to burst. There was about 1 1/2 inches of water on the floor when we finally discovered the leak. With the help of Michael, Jessie, Alex, and Ben, they were able to turn off the water main and stop the flow of water. Clean up lasted until about 7:30 p.m. Christmas Eve, and several of us showed up Christmas Day for another hour and a half. The water not only soaked the floor and carpets/rugs, but it also was in the walls and the ceiling in the basement. We were squeegeeing the ceiling that was dripping with water from the leak. The drywall was soaked in most of the rooms downstairs.

Here is the current status:

1) Insurance has been called and we have a case number. I am collecting photos if anyone took them so we can send them to the claims adjuster. Please send them to me ASAP!

2) We had Cardinal Catastrophe come in and do an assessment. Once I hear from the claims adjuster, we'll put the two of them in contact and they'll develop a plan for making the repairs.

3) Mary Johnson will lead a group to review all the books and papers we have in the RE office and get those packed and stored as soon as possible.

4) We need volunteers...even if you can only donate a few hours we'll need bodies to sort through and throw out a lot of things in the basement. Since we'll need a dumpster with the proposed renovations, we will take advantage of the dumpster to toss things we no longer use, are broken, and/or are out of date. This will take more than a day for 2-3 hours so once we get a plan in place to make repairs, we'll be in touch with volunteer needs.

5) Fourth Saturday distribution will have to be moved from our Basement. Paula Moore is coordinating that and will let us know where distribution will take place for January/February/March and perhaps beyond!

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### **President's Column**

As we wind up 2022, I am so grateful for each of you who continue to support our church whether through donations or volunteer hours. Our RE program is moving forward and we hope to grow this for next year. Our buildings and grounds folks have certainly done more than their share given all of our leaks and challenges! Potlucks and kitchen cleaning and service needs...it is great that we always have someone willing to step forward to help when needed.

2023 brings more challenges and opportunities for us...trying to sell the building, particularly after the water leak, may pose some new challenges but once we can get the permanent easement in our hands

we'll be able to put the building on the market. Finding a new location is more challenging as we have varied ideas and desires. We plan in the spring, now that we've had a few listening sessions, to send a survey and get a good sense of what people want or are willing to accept in a new location...there is a clear difference between what we want and what is acceptable and we need to be clear how people feel about all our opportunities.

Thank you for your voices, thank you for your time, talent, and treasure, and thank you for being a part of our congregation!!

**Love and light and Happy New Year  
to all of you!**

**Robyn**



**January Coffee Hangouts  
with Rev. Krista**

Rev. Krista hosts regular Hangouts to meet with people over coffee. Everyone is welcome. There is no need to RSVP. Both locations are accessible.

Alton - January 12th - 4-5 pm. Post Commons - 300 Alby St, Alton, IL 62002.

Edwardsville - January 26th - 4-5 p.m. Sacred Grounds - 233 N Main St, Edwardsville, IL 62025

**Donations to a Family  
affiliated with the Oasis  
Women's Center**

Nancee Magilson coordinated the congregation's donations to the Oasis Women's Center. She writes *"Through the generosity of our church community, we were able to deliver gift cards for \$250 each to a mother & her 7-year-old daughter in cooperation with the Oasis Center. Thanks to all who participated in this."*



**Anna D Sparks Women's  
Alliance  
Monthly Lunch  
Thursday, January 5 at  
11:30 a.m.  
Note from Sandy Shaner**



At the last meeting we decided to begin the year by revisiting **El Maguey** in Edwardsville. The address is 1534 Troy Road in the Montclair Shopping Center. We've been there before, sampled many items from their extensive menu, appreciated the service and enjoyed ourselves.

The web site is here if you want to check the address or menu for choices.

<http://www.el-maguey-edwardsville.com/>

I'm assuming that Mona will still be collecting books for her charity so keep that in mind and bring some to pass along.

Please let [Sandy](#) know by **Tuesday, January 3, 2023** if you plan to attend. As always, we'll be watching weather forecasts and only keep our lunch plan if we can travel safely.

**Men's Group Lunch  
Thursday, January 12 @ 11:30 p.m.**

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

## UU CRASH COURSE SERIES

### Winter/Spring 2023 Classes - On Zoom

**The UU Crash Course Series: Just enough information to make you dangerous! Offered by Rev. Krista Taves. On zoom. Register at [revkristataves@gmail.com](mailto:revkristataves@gmail.com).**

**January 18.** 7:00 - 8:15 pm - A Crash Course on American Unitarian, Universalist and Unitarian Universalist History - 1800 - 1961.

**February 15.** 7:00 - 8:15 pm - A Crash Course in Unitarian Universalist Theology

**March 15.** 7:00 - 8:15 pm - A Crash Course on Unitarian Universalism since 1945

**April 12.** 7:00 - 8:15 pm - A Crash Course on Unitarian, Universalist and Unitarian Universalist Statements of Identity and Principles through the years



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 seeks to honor the diversity and particularity of cultural traditions while connecting with our UU identity.



On Dec. 18, the children learned about Hanukkah and made Menorahs.

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.

## Social Justice News.

Here in Illinois, we are blessed to have the Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois. (<http://www.uuani.org>), which provides Unitarian Universalists across Illinois with advocacy and legislative leadership to effectively build community and power to promote justice and a healthy planet. UUANI focuses primarily on advocating for legislation and policy changes that reflect our social justice priorities. For instance, this fall UUANI encouraged all UUs to contact our legislators in support of the Pre-Trial Fairness Act which banned the practice of posting bail in order for release before a trial. We were successful in protecting the Pre-Trial Fairness Act from attempts to dismantle or weaken it.

Our church’s social justice team (John Herndon, Dee Evans, and Rev. Krista Taves) is focused on harnessing the moral energy of our congregation to support the priorities that UUANI has set for the coming legislative session. At this time those priorities are restorative justice, environmental justice, immigration rights, and LGBTQia rights.

Whenever UUANI makes a request of congregations, we will work to help as many of us respond to that request as possible. This is usually as simple as mailing a letter or making a phone call. Sometimes we will have laptops available after church if there is an urgent request. UUANI always provides resources to make responding as easy and quick as possible. So be on the lookout for when we send out communications from UUANI. And know that when you respond to the ask, you are joining 1000s of UUs across Illinois who are doing the same thing. We are definitely stronger together.

## 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.

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### Starting Point: An Introduction to the Unitarian Universalist Journey begins in January

This 4-part series offers those considering Unitarian Universalism as a spiritual path the opportunity to experience UUism through a small group experience. You will learn about our faith tradition, explore your own spiritual journey, and connect with others who are also seeking a spiritual home or faith. Long time members and friends seeking a small group experience are also welcome. To register email [revkristataves@gmail.com](mailto:revkristataves@gmail.com).

Session 1: **Sunday, January 15, 2 - 4 p.m. on Zoom**  
Your Journey - Sharing Our Stories and Spiritual Roadmaps

Session 2: **Monday, January 23, 6 - 8 p.m. on Zoom**  
The Unitarian Universalist Journey and the Journey of our Congregation

Session 3: **Sunday, January 29, 2 - 4 p.m. on Zoom**  
Our Journey Together - The Three Paths of Unitarian Universalism Part 1

The date of the 4<sup>th</sup> session in February will be announced later.

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## CHURCH CONTACTS

2022-2023

### Board Members

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