

FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS



Congregation established 1836

Newsletter of the First Unitarian Church Alton, Illinois

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



May 2023

Welcome to church!! We hope to see you in person this month. For the time being we ask that you still wear a mask during the worship service 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 May 2023

May 7

Speaker: To be announced

- Children’s RE Class

May 14

Speaker: Rev. Krista Taves

Title: *Flower Communion Sunday.*

Summary: Join us for this uniquely Unitarian tradition created by Revs. Norbert and Maya Capek, founders of the Unitarian Church of Prague, Czechoslovakia in the 1920s. You are encouraged to bring fresh flowers with you, from your garden if you can, or from the store if you can’t.

May 21

Speaker: Dee Evans

Title: *“Change, Joy, and Grief, and Hope in New Beginnings.”*

Summary: We may be overjoyed or we may be in grief about a potential move to another place. But there is always hope and we can support one another in that hope.

- Children’s RE Class

May 28

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: *“May their memory always be for a blessing.”*

Summary: When people in our lives die, grief can take many complicated forms. Join us this Memorial Day weekend to look at what our UU faith has to say about death and dying, and especially what it teaches us about grieving. "

- Potluck – Please bring something to share.



Message from Our Minister - The Rev. Krista Taves

On Sunday, May 14th, we are celebrating the Annual Flower Communion, a uniquely Unitarian ritual that celebrates both our inherent dignity and worthiness and the interdependent web that holds us together as a beloved community. Everyone brings a flower to church that Sunday. Some of us bring flowers from our gardens, some of us buy them at the store. Many of us will bring extras so that those who came without flowers can participate. The flower we hold represents the unique essence of who we are. During the service we bring our flower to the front and place it in a vase. The vase symbolizes the community. Placing the flower in the vase symbolizes that we each have something special to offer. Then each person takes a different flower from the vase, symbolizing that the community nourishes us.

The Flower Communion was developed by Norbert and Maya during a difficult time in the life of their congregation. There was conflict in the church between those who wanted no ritual and those who wanted ritual, between those who wanted hymns and those who didn't, between those who wanted prayer and those who said no way! Each faction was trying to get Rev. Capek to side with them. The Flower Communion was his attempt to help the congregation remember that every person is unique and of worth. They needed each other even in their differences, maybe especially because of their differences. He wanted them to see their differences as a strength, not a threat.

You, the members and friends of this congregation, are having some important conversations about the future of the church. This conversation gained energy when you voted to sell the building. We have had two congregational conversations and a congregational survey about what your priorities are for a new home. Since then, the Moving Team has looked at 7 possible new locations, always bearing in mind what you shared.

One of the central questions is about religious iconography, which interestingly was also a huge issue in the Prague congregation. Prague was also predominantly Catholic, as Alton is, and members were divided as to whether they wanted symbols in their congregation at all. There has been energy here at First Alton about religious symbols given that 6 of the 7

possible locations are Christian churches who are considering opening their doors to us. All of those churches have Christian iconography which includes the central Christian symbol of the cross and pictures of Jesus.

One characteristic of UU churches is that many of us come out of other religious traditions and become UUs as adults. Some of us come with emotional and spiritual scars from the religions of our upbringing. Christian symbols can be disturbing to some who are recovering from their childhood experience. And yet, here we are, considering moving in with a Christian church, with Christians who are opening their doors to us as an expression of their faith and with an appreciation of our shared values.

In essence, we are bumping up against what our faith calls us to be and where some of us are on our spiritual journey. We proclaim that we affirm and embrace difference and that we welcome people of all religious backgrounds and beliefs. The transition that this congregation chose is asking us to embrace difference on a different level than we are used to. We are used to thinking about this in terms of how we welcome those who come to us. But now, we are the ones that are walking in the door, hoping to be welcomed into someone else's religious home.

It's a delicate dance. How do we honor the spiritual needs of those who are still healing from their religions of origin and respect and, and line with our principles, affirm the faith tradition of those who are considering sharing their lovingly tended religious home with us? There is no easy answer to this. We must live into the question.

I look forward to seeing you at our Annual Flower Communion.

Yours in faith and service,
Rev. Krista.

Church Board Meeting – on Zoom

Monday, May 8 at 6:30 p.m.

If you have an item you wish the Board to discuss please contact Robyn Berkley robynberkley@yahoo.com.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings all...we are closing out our fiscal year and it has certainly been quite eventful. There is still more ahead of us. On Tuesday, May 9th we plan to host a virtual town hall to discuss our different options for where we will hopefully be moving. We will have our stewardship campaign kicked off mid-May as well with the hopes of seeing a strong budget to bring us into the new year. Lastly, our annual meeting will be in July where there will be a lot to discuss. Most of all, what is important is our continued efforts to pull together as a congregation...as a team...unified together in our mission.

Much ahead of us, but I am confident as we pull together, we will make it all work! Happy May to you all!

Love and Light, Robyn

Transition Virtual Town Hall Meeting

On Tuesday evening May 9 at 6 p.m. please join us for a virtual town hall for a detailed update on potential sites we are considering for the move. We will provide information for you on each of the sites we have visited and share our short list with you. This will give you an opportunity to ask questions of the transition team. The zoom info is listed below! We look forward to seeing you on 5/9!

First Unitarian Church Alton is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Transition Town Hall Meeting

Time: May 9, 2023 06:00 PM Central Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83070155505?pwd=dGlkd2RWMWtDRml1ZFZEcXJmUzhFQT09>

Meeting ID: 830 7015 5505 Passcode: 162491

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,83070155505#,,,,*162491# US
(Chicago)

+13092053325,,83070155505#,,,,*162491# US

In Sympathy



The Congregation's sympathy goes out to **Mark Hinrichs** on the death of his father, Paul Hinrichs on April 9, 2023.

May 2023

CELEBRATION!!



Congratulations to **Pat and Jim Moore** on their 50th anniversary. They were married on May 26, 1973. They are celebrating by going on a cruise early in May.



May Coffee Hangouts

Come for good conversation and no agenda except to connect! Everyone is welcome. Both locations are accessible.

Alton. Thursday, April 11 at 4 p.m. at the Post Commons.

125 years ago, in 1898, 12 women of the Alton Unitarian church formed an organization to help the needy in the community. The women named their group the Anna D. Sparks Alliance in memory of church member Anna Davenport Chapman Sparks – a woman of indomitable spirit and a community organizer.

Anna D Sparks Women's Alliance

Thursday, May 4 @ 11:30 a.m.

Location: Bakers & Hale

7120 Montclair Ave., Godfrey IL

<https://bakershale.com/>

RSVP to [Sandy Shaner](#) by May 1.



Men's Lunch Group

Thursday, May 11

11:30 a.m.

Location to be announced via email.

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

Children's Religious Education



Carol McGrew and Anna Hosier work together with children from nursery age through elementary school age to provide programming. The curriculum chosen is "Holidays and Holydays" which focuses on those holidays that lift up values that we as UUs affirm.



The last Sunday of each month we have a **Pot Luck lunch** at church. Everyone is invited. Please bring something to share on May 28 and stay after the service to enjoy good food and conversation.

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.

CHURCH CONTACTS

2022-2023

Board Members

President: Robyn Berkley robynberkley@yahoo.com
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