

# FIRST UNITARIAN FOCUS

## Newsletter of the First Unitarian Church Alton, Illinois

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July 2023



Congregation established 1836



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>.

### 10 a.m. WORSHIP SERVICES July 2023

July 2

**Speaker:** Robyn Berkley

**Title:** *The Limits of Freedom*

**Summary:** This sermon from the “Faith Rocket” series was written by The Rev. Robert Bertschausen, currently interim Lead Minister at the White Bear UU Church in Minnesota.

July 9

**Speaker:** John Herndon

**Title:** *Everyday Ritual and Beauty: a secular view of the profound beauty in everyday life*

**Summary:** In 2019 Sasha Sagan, daughter of Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan) wrote a book entitled “For Small Creatures Such as we” part memoir and also a

July 2023

manifesto for looking for the beauty and meaning of everyday life with or without a “religious” viewpoint. I will reflect on this theme and similar is it relates to a non-Christian viewpoint and how as an adherent to a liberal religious philosophy I strive to wonder about the beauty of our random universe.

July 16

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

**Title:** *Change & Continuity.*

**Summary:** The saying goes 'the more things change, the more they stay the same'. How can we know if our efforts are creating sustainable lasting change? How can we hold on to what is important when things are shifting around us too fast to keep up? Join us for a service centered on change & continuity.

The church’s Annual Meeting follows this service.

**July 23**

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

**Title:** *UU Principles #1: Inherent worth and value-what, where, when and how?*

**Summary:** We hold up our principles as the core of our religious being. But how can we balance people being of infinite worth and value when they are doing hateful, horrible things? Join us as we look at our 1st Principle from a variety of perspectives.

**This is a great service to invite a friend to, since they can learn more about who we are as UUs! Also, it will be our 4th Sunday POTLUCK so bring a visitor and/or an ingredient labelled dish to share!**

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### **July 30 Worship Service**

**Speaker: Joy Hoeft**

**Title:** *Singing Our Visions of Actions, Transformation, and Hope*

**Summary:** There is no sermon 'per se,' but the congregation will be participating in singing songs that represent Unitarian and Universalist and Unitarian Universalists' thoughts on various social reforms throughout our nation's history. It was written by Eugene Navias for a presentation at the 2003 UUA General Assembly.



### **Rev. Claudia's Column**

As I write this newsletter, I am about to celebrate our son's 4th birthday, and I think of all the many ways life has changed for us and for the world in the last 4 years. Globally we have had a pandemic (that is still going on!) the first war in Europe in decades, and massive crises caused by global warming. Here in America we have seen civil rights stripped away faster than I can remember, with no end to the hateful laws, bans, and violence in

sight. Closer to home in the last four years here at Alton have seen three ministers, a major decision to move, and beloved ones come and go as a result of all the change.

It can feel like so much has changed, and I want to acknowledge the griefs we all hold, even as I also want to lift up our joys and moments of continuity. One of the joys is getting to celebrate together all that we have accomplished year to year, and all the opportunities we have before us as a congregation to create and sustain an incredible community both for ourselves and for the other spheres we interact with. Every time we share our values and principles with others, we offer an alternative vision of the world than we tend to see on our news feeds. Being agents of hope and joy, being able to celebrate and liftup good things is as vital and important as being present and holding others in grief and loss.

As we celebrate another year in the life of our church at our annual meeting on July 16, know that I am here to be present and witness with you all these things, and so is our community.

May each of you find in this place people to hold you in your emotions, principles, and values to inspire you on your journey, and others to walk, roll and ride beside you on the long, long road to Beloved Community.

Amen, and Blessed Be.

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### **Annual Meeting Info**

The meeting will begin at 11:15 a.m. in the sanctuary. It will be available via zoom. It is the same link as we used for the virtual coffee hour.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88505584363?fbclid=IwAR0hRmxfn2ZSIo-U98VWOyq9-uXvxlkhIPC7nTK7YqfGa\\_u6v6ilbcknr5g](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88505584363?fbclid=IwAR0hRmxfn2ZSIo-U98VWOyq9-uXvxlkhIPC7nTK7YqfGa_u6v6ilbcknr5g)

#### Agenda:

- Overview of budget and financials and proposed new budget
- Board member changes - Alex Hoeft as President elect, Jessie Dominick rolling onto the Board. Pat Moore rolling off. Need 1-year extensions for Robyn, Mary, and Aiden.
- Service animal/Pet Policy approval
- RE changes
- Minister's Report
- Vote on new location (if we have info to share by then).

If you cannot attend the Annual Meeting, and want to vote, please email or call [Mary Johnson](#) by July 10 to have a paper ballot mailed to you.

### President's Column

New beginnings are exciting and scary all at the same time. I think about times when I've had to pick up the pieces and start over. Relationships that ended, job changes, divorce, death...with every new beginning is the end of something that matters to us, and the impact can be deep and profound to many. This has been a year for sure. I love what is ahead of us but I would be remiss if I didn't share that aspects of this transition continue to weigh on me...leaving our home of almost 200 years to find a new home has made me sad, excited, concerned, scared, thrilled...I vacillate through emotions on a regular basis depending on what's going on. When there are floods in the basement, I can't wait to leave...when it is beautifully decorated for Christmas...I feel pangs of longing and loss. Trust me friends, I am feeling all the feels, just as you are.

I want you to know the selling and moving team has worked really hard to have a solid plan for us and a home that will be meaningful. There are a lot of logistics ahead of us and we'll need everyone's help to make this happen! Packing, storing, moving, all of it!

Embracing new beginnings has two parts and we are doing our best to honor both the sadness of what we leave behind, and the thrill of what lies ahead. New beginnings require us to be very present to what we are feeling and why...to own our feelings as we need to in order to comply with our Right Relationships Covenant. I love that we are all re-examining what it means to be a UU congregation in the St Louis area...we are combining forces with other congregations to be a united front against the challenges that we are facing in society at large, as well as in the State of Missouri. We want to be a beacon of light and a place of comfort and solitude. Working in partnership with the other UUs in the region is exciting!

Come take my hand and let's move on this journey together!

**Love and Light...Robyn**

July 2023



## Anna D Sparks Women's Alliance Lunch at My Just Desserts in Alton

Thursday, July 6 @ 11:00 a.m.  
(Note earlier than usual meeting time)

(Church members, friends, visitors – all are invited to attend these monthly women's lunches held in various locations area-wide).

RSVP to [Sandy Shaner](#) by June 3.

### Men's Lunch Group Thursday, July 13 11:30 a.m.

Location to be announced via email.

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



**Rev. Krista Taves** was interviewed on June 22 on Inside with Jen Psaki on MSNBC. Go to the link below to see that interview.

<https://www.msnbc.com/inside-with-jen-psaki/watch/-state-sponsored-violence-against-women-s-bodies-reverend-taves-on-missouri-abortion-ban-184327749612>





UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
PITTSBURGH · JUNE 21 - 25, 2023

## UUA General Assembly Worship Service

If you missed watching the Worship Service from the UUA General Assembly on June 25 you missed a great service. Here is a link to that service. The sermon was entitled “*Ever Willing: Becoming the People Our World Needs.*”

<https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2023/sunday-worship>

The speaker was the Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Senior Minister of the First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor, MI. The Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd also participated in the service. Those of you who were involved in our “Leap of Faith” pilot program activities some years ago will recognize Rev. Ladd as the minister of the mentoring congregation we were matched with as an “aspiring congregation” in growing Unitarian Universalism.

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## General Assembly Report from Dee Evans

“I attended GA virtually. GA will be all virtual next year (2024). I believe this year was the best GA that I attended, including the ones I’ve attended in person. Why? **Worship.** All the worship services had beautiful music that was innovative and creative. It got me involved. Secondly, all the worship services had pertinent sermons. **Programming/Sessions.** All the general sessions and sessions that you could choose from were all well prepared, the material was relevant, and engaging. There was a session on Disruptive Church. It talked about how we meet, where we meet, what we do when we meet. It covered how if we are going to exist in the future given that many churches are dying, we are going to have to change the way we do church. Of course, since it said everything I believe about what church should be, it was my favorite session of all of GA. **Meetups.** With less programming, there was actually time to either take a break or go to a meet-up. My meet-ups

were with the UU Society of Community Ministers, composed of both lay and ministerial members. But there were other meetups online and getting to know people across the nation, or finding someone who lives in the area that you didn't know about, is always fun. **General Sessions.** I attended all four General Sessions where delegates vote on things. I usually find these boring and this is the only GA except when I was a delegate that I attended all of them. I cannot believe how efficient and interesting they were. It was really exciting when they got to Article II revisions and changes. I loved the debate on whether or not we should divest entirely of fossil fuel investments and what this would do to the UU portfolio. It was voted not to divest as some of these very firms are moving toward eco-friendly ways of generating power. **Other.** It was so beautiful to see our new president, Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt, installed. This is not the first time I saw a president installed, but somehow this time, it was special. **On-line experience.** Finally, you might think attending GA on-line is a secondhand experience. I assure you that it is NOT. I can tell you what it is NOT. It is not walking down long halls to get from one session to another. It is not sitting on uncomfortable chairs, It is not eating in a convention center with unhealthy, but expensive food. It is NOT paying over \$200 dollars a night for a hotel room so you don't have to drive through half the city to get to the convention center if you pick a cheaper place to stay. It is NOT paying \$\$\$ for transportation. On-line is a chance to participate fully in GA and be in the UU world. It is a place to meet people, grow spiritually, be challenged, and have fun. I highly encourage you to attend the GA next year which will be all on-line. I encourage you to even consider being a delegate.”



## Children at Church on Sundays This Summer

**Marcella Dominick** will be providing childcare in the nursery for children aged 3 and under. Volunteers will be needed to help when there are children in the nursery, as our church safety policy states that 2 adults must be present.

Nathan Brown and Jennifer Lewis are providing programming for older children.

Religious Education (RE) class(es) will begin in the fall.

On the **4th Sunday** of each month a **Potluck Lunch** is held at church. Everyone is invited. Please bring something to share on **July 23** and stay after the service to enjoy good food and conversation.

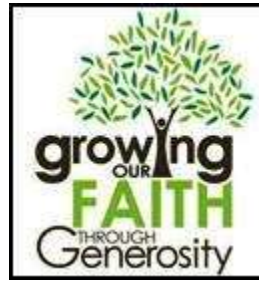


## Becoming a Member of this Church

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.



**STEWARDSHIP DRIVE  
(PLEDGE CAMPAIGN)  
PROGRESS**

**FY2024  
(church fiscal year is**

**July 2023 – June 2024)**

**Goal: \$80,000.00**

**Pledges through 6/29/2023: \$57,060.00**

The Pledge Campaign is extended until Friday, 7/7/2023 to give everyone a bit of additional time to evaluate possible contribution opportunities.

In case you have not received the Stewardship Campaign materials via USPS, we have attached the Stewardship Letter, and the pdf fillable version of the Stewardship Pledge Card along with a completed example. If you use the electronic form, please return it to [Buddy Stricker](#) at your earliest convenience.



## Stories by David Wiseman

David and Audrey Wiseman joined the church in 1956 and were active members throughout their lifetimes. Audrey died in 2017 and David in 2019.

David was a great storyteller and would share his stories with the children and the congregation.

His family has put together some of his stories in a book entitled *SeymoursWeb* and it is illustrated by his son, Eric. The book should soon be available on Amazon.

## Death of Former Member



Word has been received of the death this past May of **Paul Berney**. He and his wife, Joyce, joined the church in 1973 and were very active members for many years.

Paul served numerous non-consecutive three-year terms as church treasurer and did a lot of work with the Building and Grounds Committee. The Berneys moved to Escondido California about 10 years ago to be closer to their daughter MaryBeth. Joyce died five years ago. Paul continued to be interested in our church happenings and read the church newsletter every month.

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## CHURCH CONTACTS

2022 - 2023 church year

(Election of new Board members will take place at the Annual Meeting on 7/16/23)

### 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)

Member at Large: Carol McGrew  
[carol\\_mcgrew@yahoo.com](mailto:carol_mcgrew@yahoo.com)

Member at Large: Pat Moore  
[patjimmoore@charter.net](mailto:patjimmoore@charter.net)

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)

Building and Grounds: Michael Tarabulski  
[madtparty@uwalumni.com](mailto:madtparty@uwalumni.com)

Custodial: Hedda Kirk [hthrkirk@gmail.com](mailto:hthrkirk@gmail.com)

Music: Joy Hoeft [kjabhoeft@gmail.com](mailto:kjabhoeft@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor: Mary Johnson

Office Support: Nancee Magilson  
[nmagilson@hotmail.com](mailto:nmagilson@hotmail.com)

### Minister

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

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

**YouTube Channel:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSx-6KMgYdgy1zktuaPUTIQ>**

**Facebook:**

**<https://www.facebook.com/firstuualton>**

**Instagram: firstuualton**

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