

First Unitarian Focus

Newsletter of the First Unitarian Church of Alton, Illinois



Congregation established 1836

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

September 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 elsewhere in the church building. 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 September 2023

September 3

Speaker: Mary Johnson

Sermon written by Rev. Phillip Lund

Title: “Not Just Foolishly Romantic”

Summary: To be hopeful in these hard times is more than being foolishly romantic It does however require some effort on our part The good news is that every congregation can tap into energy it needs to act to make this world a better place.

RE Class meets

Reminder: This is a “clean” Sunday – no food or drink, and masks are to be worn throughout the building.

September 10

Speaker: Robyn Berkley

Title: TBA

September 2023

September 17

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: “Grief, Loss, and New Beginnings.”

Summary: We are preparing to move, and change brings grief. We look to nature and the constant change of seasons for guidance on how to navigate the changes we face as a congregation.

RE Class meets

September 24

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: “Ingathering and Water Communion.”

Summary: Every year Unitarian Universalists around the world celebrate the beginning of a new church year by collecting water from a place or event that holds meaning for them. We invite you to join us for this celebration, bringing water to share

during service and a dish to share at our ingathering picnic after service.



Rev. Claudia's Column

Happy fall
everyone!

As I write this,
the temperature is
creeping back up
and it certainly

doesn't feel like the world is turning and the season is changing, but in just a few short weeks it will be Autumn.

I admit to being a lover of Fall, the glorious display of colors, the crunch of leaves, having warm coffee on a cult day and everything apple pie and pumpkin spice, it's my favorite time of year for sure.

This year though, we are going to be busy! Between selling and packing and moving and set up and outreach it can all feel like a lot, because it is! For all the mundane things like deciding what to keep and what to give away, there is a spiritual and emotional aspect to this that adds to the sense of overwhelm. I encourage everyone to give yourself the space and time and grace to feel whatever comes up in the moment, and to extend that grace to others who are having their own moments as well.

It is a huge and hard thing that we are doing, but everyone wants to see the church thrive and prosper, reaching the Metro East with our life saving message of love, inclusion, and hope.

When the emotions are too much, when tempers flare, when stress makes us all spiky and when the grief makes us want to just throw in the towel and walk away, it is my prayer that the beauty of Autumn will remind us that change is constant, that everything has a season, and that all our emotions are taking place within the container of this beloved community where each of us is wanted, and needed, and appreciated, and that whatever turmoil is happening will pass.

No matter how you voted or what you think of the move, you are loved and wanted and needed here. I'm holding space for you to feel whatever emotions arise at whatever time they happen. Please reach out to me, to each other, and to the spiritual practices that sustain you during this difficult time.

May you feel love and hope surround you this day and every day. In faith and hope,
Claudia

President's Column

Greetings friends...I am overwhelmed with all sorts of emotions...relief, sadness, happiness, apprehension, joy, sorrow...you know the gamut because I'm certain you are feeling the same things as I am. We knew in July 2022 that this day was coming...we didn't know WHEN and we didn't know WHERE, but here we are, the building is going to be sold and we are ready to launch into a new adventure in an Edwardsville location.

I know this is difficult...I am feeling it too. But I am also excited for the potential ahead of us. I feel very blessed that you are all open, willing, and able to make hard decisions and still stay in covenant and community with each other. I think it is important to hold space for those who are saddened by this move and who really didn't want us to move. I see you...I honor you...I understand. I also want to hold space for those who feel the release from the challenges this building has presented and understand the relief we feel not having to deal with floods, and repairs, and construction related issues...it's been quite the journey this past year dealing with the building issues.

Lastly, I am grateful for all of you...each and every one. A congregation is the people who love and support each other in our spiritual and life pursuits. And we have fully exemplified this through the entire process. Thank you...!!

I don't think there is more to say this month...this is everything and really the only things that matter right now.

Love and Light...Robyn

Information from Robyn about the Upcoming Move

On Sunday August 27th, the congregation voted 36 yea, 5 nay, 1 abstain, to pursue a lease agreement in Edwardsville at the following address: 871 S. Arbor Vitae, Suite 002, Edwardsville IL 62025. We are currently in negotiation with the landlord at the Edwardsville property and hope to have that lease secured within the next week.

As well, we have an accepted counteroffer from John Simmons to purchase our church building with a closing date no later than 11/15/2023.

Efforts are now underway to develop a plan for us to pack, and sell or get rid of materials we will no longer need as we move to a new location. Our business analyst will help us put our plan into Microsoft Projects to ensure we meet deadlines to get out of the space by the 11/15 deadline. We will need volunteers and efforts from all able-bodied humans to be able to help us with the moving efforts.

Finally, we are planning two special services, the first will be a farewell service for our current location, and the second will be a blessing service for our new location. These rituals are so very important for us to be able to make the changes needed for our church. As planning commences, we will let you know what the plans are and the appropriate dates.

UPCOMING FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS.

We are in need of volunteers to staff our booth at several upcoming festivals. The needs are as follows...any and all help is welcomed and desired. **High priority staffing is noted with **.**

Please email robynberkley@yahoo.com to let Robyn know what days and when you can volunteer to help at the booths!



ALTON PRIDE Alton Pride Festival

Saturday, September 9
Downtown Belle St.
12 noon to 10 p.m.

****Alton Pride - Saturday September 9th Set up around 10 a.m., Booth open from 12 – 6 p.m. (maybe later...working out details).**



Tower Grove Pride

Tower Grove Park in St. Louis City

Saturday Sept. 23 & Sunday Sept. 24

11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Tower Grove Pride - Saturday September 23. Set up around 10a, booth open until 6p (awaiting final details...Rev. Kim Mason from First Church is managing this event)...if you can spare an hour or two that will help us support this endeavor for our sister congregations.



Unity Fest in Edwardsville

Saturday, September 30

11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Leclaire Park
900 Hale Ave

****This is our opportunity to get the word out about our move to Edwardsville.**



After undergoing major abdominal surgery and spending a month at BJC Hospital **Michael Tarabulski** came home this week. We wish him a speedy recovery.



Anna Ds Lunch Gathering

Thursday, September 7 @ 11 a.m.

The Anna Ds – known formally as the Anna Davenport Sparks Women’s Alliance – has been an integral part of the First Unitarian Church of

Alton since the Alliance was founded in 1898.

The Anna Ds meet for lunch on the first Thursday of each month at various restaurants and cafes in communities on both sides of the Mississippi.

September’s gathering will be at **My Just Desserts**, 31 E. Broadway in Alton. Please join us. RSVP by September 4th to [Sandy Shaner](#).

ROMEOS Lunch Group (Retired Old Men Eating out) – Thursday, September 14 at 11:30.



Location to be announced via email.

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



Religious Education

School-aged children meet for class on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. On

other Sundays quiet activities are provided for children in the sanctuary.

There is a staffed nursery available every Sunday for children under the age of 5.

LOOKING AHEAD TO OCTOBER

Mark Your Calendars for Dee Evans’ Ordination

Ordination into the UU ministry is the sacred religious ritual in which a solemn covenantal vow is publicly made by the ordinand and a call to ministry is affirmed by a UU congregation.



Dee’s ordination will take place on **Saturday, October 28, 2023 starting at 2 p.m.** the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Springfield Il. The address is: 745 Woodside Road, Springfield, IL 62711. This is where Dee did her ministerial internship. It is hoped that many members from the Alton Unitarian church will be able to attend.

There will be refreshments following the ordination ceremony and **we from Alton are asked to contribute the desserts.** More details, and a dessert signup sheet, will be available later. Jennifer Lewis and Mary Johnson are on the Ordination Planning Committee along with several people from Abraham Lincoln. If you have questions, please ask Dee or Jennifer or Mary.

Starting Point

An Introduction to the Unitarian Universalist Journey
All sessions are Monday evenings at 6:30 pm Central time on Zoom.



Oct 16: Your Journey - Sharing Our Stories and Spiritual Roadmaps

Oct 23: The Unitarian Universalist Journey & The Journey of Our Church

Also continuing on Nov. 6 & 13.

For Zoom Link contact Pastor Claudia at
dr.claudia.hall@gmail.com,

CHURCH CONTACTS

2023-2024 church year

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