

Metro East Unitarian Universalist Congregation Focus January 2024



*Newsletter of the
Metro East Unitarian
Universalist Congregation*



Masonic Lodge, Glen Carbon IL

Location: *Masonic Lodge -- 90 Kriege Farm Road, Glen Carbon IL 62034*

Welcome! We hope to see you in person this month at our new home in Glen Carbon. For those at home, the worship service will be live streamed each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. on YouTube (or click Virtual Services) on the church's homepage at <https://www.firstuualton.org>.

December 31 – No Worship Service today.

January 7

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: *New year, New you: why be Unitarian Universalist?*

Summary: Get a refresher on the basics of being UU and invite your friends and family who are always asking "but what do you believe?"

Be sure to plan to stay after the service. Tasty refreshments and an assortment of beverages will be served as we welcome all into this home of spirit, justice, and hope.

Childcare is available for children under the age of 5, and a Religious Education (RE) class for school-aged children will be offered during the service.

January 14

Speaker: To Be Announced

Childcare is available for children under the age of 5.

January 21

Speaker: Rev. Dee Evans

Title: *"Seeing the Glass Half Full is Okay"*

Summary: Yes, it is okay to see the glass as half full. Hope is not seeing the glass as full. Hope is seeing the glass as it is so that we can wisely decide whether to leave it as it is or to fill it. We will investigate how hope moves us toward our Unitarian Universalist value of justice in an unjust world.

Childcare is available for children under the age of 5, and a Religious Education (RE) class for school-aged children will be offered during the service.

January 28

Speaker: Dr. Rev. Claudia Hall

Title: *The ordinary IS the sacred.*

Summary: In our faith we do not separate the ordinary and the sacred, instead we find the sacred in the ordinary. Come explore ways UUs have articulated this theology through hymns, poems, and writings throughout the years.

Childcare is available for children under the age of 5.

The Mid-Year Congregational Business meeting will be held at 11:15 a.m. following the service. Childcare will be provided during this meeting.

Rev. Claudia's Column

Hello everyone, What. A. Month!



December is always a lot, and this year was no exception for me, and I assume for most of you as well. We aren't quite done with December yet as I write this, but I am already looking forward

to January and the relief of things settling back down after the holidays to whatever 'normal' looks like for a little while.

Normal here at church looks BUSY! I hope you have had a chance to attend services, either in person or online, because we are hopping. There is such a fantastic energy and wonderful buzz of friends old and new gathering to celebrate the season with like minds.

We have had our first community event, a Christmas Eve Brunch and Caroling and it was so good to help bring the light of the season's joy to

those who may not have a lot of visitors at this time of year. A huge THANK YOU to everyone who helped with the brunch, welcomed new folks, made food, cleaned up, carpooled, and caroled and just made the day run smoothly.

Our next big event is almost here. **We are having a community wide Open House on Sunday, January 7th** which will be a service followed by refreshments and fellowship for the adults and games outside for the kids, weather depending. This is a great chance for us to really show our warm hearts and welcome to new people, so if you see folks you don't know, say hi! Introduce yourself to someone new this week, and I bet you will find you have something in common.

Our faith has such wonderful diversity, of thoughts and actions, of beliefs and practices, but at our heart we are a community of love. Inviting more people into that love and welcome is what we are all about, so I invite everyone to help with that, especially at our special events like the open house.

Finally, **I am teaching a class this month called "Healing, holding, and letting go: Dealing with your religious past"**. It's a 3-part class on Zoom, more details later in the newsletter, but it is open to anyone so if you have a friend or loved one that has been burned by the religion they grew up in, send them a note or give them a call and see if they are interested.

Wishing you bright blessings and warm hopes this New Year!

In faith, Pastor Claudia

Hayner Library in Alton

Many of our church's historical documents and records were sent to Hayner Library to be digitized and included in a fully searchable genealogical and local history database. In addition, several sections of metal shelves and book shelves were given to the Library. We received a thank you note from the Friends of Hayner Library District indicating that the donated shelves "...have made quite a difference in the look of the building."

**"MINISTER HANG OUT IN JANUARY:
CRAFT CIRCLE WEDNESDAY"**

**January 24 – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
at the Masonic Lodge.**



Calling all crafters! We need cushions for the metal seats in the new Sanctuary.

Please bring your scissors, sewing machines and supplies (thread, needles, etc.) and come join us for our minister hang out this month at the Lodge for an hour or two of fellowship and fun

as we make simple pillowcase style cushions.

Pattern, fabric, and memory foam are all provided so we just need hands to help. If you don't sew but can trace, cut, or run stuff around the room we'd love to have you as well! Wednesday January 24, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (or a little later if we need to finish up).

Rev Dr Claudia Hall she/they
Metro East Unitarian Universalist Congregation

President's Column

INHALE *EXHALE* a big sigh of relief as we are finally getting into a routine at our new home. First, thank you to everyone who has stepped up to help. The outpouring of effort and dedication to make our new location work has been so amazing! From setting up/breaking down the sanctuary space, to contributions such as food, coffee, resources, etc. It's been pretty epic watching people and feeling the energy of joy and cooperation.

Second, someone asked me the other day if everything was proceeding as expected. I said, yes, but faster than I had anticipated. We are already seeing new faces, and a return of some beloved faces who have not been able to attend in our old building! This underscores that no matter how hard the decision was, it was the right thing to do to regroup and move to a new location. I don't want to diminish the feelings of those who were disappointed with the move and decided not to join us on this journey. I respect and honor that and
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they should know that our space is always open to them with open arms. You'll are loved and missed.

We have a few things upcoming in January. On 1/7/24 we have our grand opening to the general public, and we hope to see more folks attending. If you have been thinking about attending, please come join us! We also have our mid-year Congregational Business Meeting upcoming on January 28th We will have a zoom option available to you, but we hope you'll attend in person to get updates on our plans for the remaining portion of our church year, and into the 2025 fiscal year.

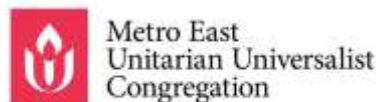
We will have regular nursery service starting January 7th. Jessie Dominick and Margaret Berkley will alternate weeks in the nursery and on those weeks where we don't have RE, we are seeking a volunteer who can be present with them, so we have two adults in the space, in alignment with our child safety policies. Both have passed background checks. If you are interested in serving as a second adult, let me know and we can arrange for a background check for you as well.

We had a lot of fun caroling on 12/24. Not only did our members enjoy the serenade, but we had others who also stopped by to listen and get in the holiday spirit! We hope to make this an annual tradition!

I remain grateful for everyone who has stepped up to the plate to make this transition as smooth as it could be. THIS is what community looks like!

Love and Light,
Robyn

UU Friends Facebook Group



If you would like to join the UU Friends Facebook Group, please contact [Robyn Berkley](#), the Group Administrator,

Workshop on Zoom

“Healing Your Religious Past”

“Healing, holding, and letting go: Dealing with your religious past.”

In this class we will look at your religious past and offer tools for you to sort through the following:

- 1) what things you were taught by prior religions that you value and still have meaning for you;
- 2) what things have harmed you and you need to heal from;
- 3) what things have held you back from your spiritual potential that you can let go.

We will address the binary (good/bad) thinking that causes so much harm and look at ways we can safely salvage what is good from our religious past without succumbing to any theology that is harmful or hateful in the process.

Mondays January 15th, 22nd, and 29th from 6-7:30 pm on Zoom.

Contact Pastor Claudia at dr.claudia.hall@gmail.com for the Zoom link.



Volunteers Needed

MEUUC Hospitality Team Volunteers Needed.

We are recruiting volunteers to help with various Sunday morning tasks on a rotating basis. These tasks include:

- 1) setting out and taking up signs, and maybe directing traffic on big event days.
- 2) staffing the front desk and asking people to sign in, helping with name tags, visitor packets, and masks.

3) greeting new people, showing them around, and making them feel at home both before worship and during coffee hour.

4) making coffee and setting up /putting away snacks.

5) cleaning up in the kitchen as needed.

“How to” directions will be printed for these various tasks and a sign-up sheet for each category will be available.

Christmas Caroling



After the worship service on Christmas Eve, some of our congregation visited Meridian Village and Stillwater Senior Living to sing carols and to wish our members and friends at these residences a Merry Christmas.

OASIS Women’s Center – Christmas for Families

Nancee Magilson once again coordinated our congregation’s giving to an Oasis family. She writes, “Thanks to the generous support of our church community, we delivered **two \$250 gift cards** for a woman and a one-year-old boy named David, continuing our practice of contributing to the Oasis Center’s annual Christmas event.”



Religious Education (RE)

RE classes for children/youth meet on the 1st and 3rd Sundays each month, beginning with a brief period in the Sanctuary for the “Story for All Ages.”

The RE class sessions will include world religions, UU history and traditions, and lessons will focus on interdependence, equity, transformation, generosity, justice, and love. In RE the students will have the opportunity to learn through play, storytelling, games, movement, and crafts and also to incorporate service projects to allow our kids to put their faith into action.

Jennifer Lewis and Nathan Brown are the RE teachers.

Anna D Sparks
Women’s Alliance
Thursday, January 4, 2024



The January meeting will be on Thursday, December 7th at 11:30 a.m. at Bluff City Grill, 424 E. Broadway, Alton IL.

<https://www.bluffcitygrillalton.com/>

Covered parking is available next to the restaurant.

All women are invited to these monthly luncheons. RSVP to [Sandy Shaner](#).



Men’s Lunch Group
Thursday,
January 11 at
11:30 a.m.

The location will be announced via email. If you’re not already on the group’s email list, contact [Paul Hebert](#).

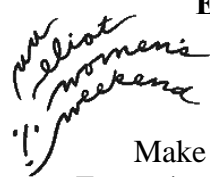
Board Members’ Retreat (No, that doesn’t mean they’re running away 😊)

There will be a Board Members’ Retreat on Saturday, January 13th from 10:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. Location still to be determined.

The History of our New Pulpit

In 2022 lightning struck a stand of oak trees on the farm of Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall and her family. The trees died and were harvested, cured, and milled by hand, then used to build the new pulpit by her husband, Robert Moore, in 2023 when the church moved from Alton to Glen Carbon. The old pulpit is in storage.

Eliot Chapel’s Women’s Weekend
May 17-19, 2024



Toddhall Retreat Center
in Columbia, Illinois

Make Time for Yourself and Renew Your Energy!

Join us for a time of relaxation, rejuvenation, and illuminating workshops to feed the mind, body, and spirit.

Stay 1 or 2 nights or come for Saturday only. New this year! You can stay Friday night and all-day Saturday including breakfast at Toddhall on Saturday morning, and lunch and dinner. We will be starting around 3:00 pm on Friday.

Women’s Weekend is: - A retreat offered for the women of Eliot Chapel, friends, family, and women of UU churches in the surrounding area.

- A time for ourselves where we can enjoy the beauty of nature, a walk in the labyrinth, fun activities, a wide array of workshops, our Scholarship Silent Auction, BYOB wine tasting, massage, crafts, singing around the bonfire, great food and best yet, camaraderie.

- Private or double rooms available. Meals are included.

For further information contact:

registrar@eliotwomensweekend.com

CHURCH CONTACTS

2023-2024 church year

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**SOME OF THESE CONTACT LINKS WILL
BE CHANGED OVER THE UPCOMING
MONTHS**

**Metro East Unitarian Universalist
Congregation**

**Location: *Masonic Lodge -
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Website: <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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