

Metro East Unitarian Universalist Congregation Focus March 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 meeting place 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>.

March 3 @ 10 a.m.

Speaker: Sayer Johnson

Title: *“My blue boat home, reflections on my UU journey”*

Summary: Sayer will reflect on his experience as a searcher, a parent, and as a human craving community and connection through his Unitarian lens.

Bio: Sayer Johnson has been a part of the congregation since 2007. He identifies as a queer trans storyteller, a proud parent, and lover of most things pickled.

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.

This is a CLEAN Sunday. We will not be providing refreshments. Please do not bring food or drink.

March 10 @ 10 a.m. (Day Light Savings time)

Speaker: John Herndon

Title: The Title is “Why and What”

Summary: Many other religious traditions celebrate seasons of introspection, penitence, fasting for example - Lent and Ramadan. We UU’s continue to ask the most profound questions all of our lives - Why are we here? and What is our purpose?

Childcare is available for children under the age of 5.

Daylight savings time (DST) begins at 2:00 a.m. this morning. Please remember to set your clocks ahead before you go to sleep on Saturday night.

March 17 @ 10 a.m.

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: "St Patrick's Day"

Summary: When is a holiday religion, when culture, and when both? More importantly, when does it matter?

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.

This is a CLEAN Sunday. We will not be providing refreshments. Please do not bring food or drink.

March 24 @ 10 a.m.



Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: "Flower Communion"

Summary: This beautiful service celebrates the wonder of Spring by inviting each member to bring a flower from near their home to church, where they are all mingled together in a common vase, then at the end of the service they are taken home again, each flower to a new place as a reminder to us that we merge and share our gifts and beauty with one another.

Childcare is available for children under the age of 5.

March 31 @ 10 a.m.

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: "Easter Sunday"

Summary: As UUs we may not believe in a literal resurrection, but we do believe that new life is possible after a horrible tragedy. Come hear how we too can have the miracle of new life after death.



Rev. Claudia's Column

Spring is here! Sadly, it is a full month too early, thanks to climate change, but I am enjoying the nice weather on the days we have it before the increasing heat forces me inside for most of the year. It is a wonderful time to get out and about and as you do, I encourage you to look around for ways you can connect with others here in our church community.

We have so many things happening it is hard to even know where to start, but this month I want to lift up two things, the new class coming up at the end of the month on **Creating Your Own Theology** and the need for **Set Up and Break Down** teams.

First, if you are approached to help set up or break down the worship space, and you can physically do so, please say yes! We need everyone to take a few weeks here and there to keep services moving smoothly. This is the biggest task we have right now because without it we can't do church. We have to get all the A/V equipment and seats in place before worship, and then we have to put everything back for the Masons to use the space later in the week. This is our part of the bargain for the INCREDIBLE deal they gave us on the rent, so please do help out as you are physically able. Signups will be going around church soon. If you cannot help physically, but you might be able to help us coordinate, that is also really useful, so stop a Board member or myself and we can get you connected that way too.

The **Create Your Own Theology** class is on zoom, it's **Mondays March 18 & 25 from 6-7:30 p.m.**, and it's a great way to invite people to check us out because this is about people exploring their own spirituality, not about me telling anyone what to believe. So, if you have a friend, colleague or family member, a neighbor or co-worker that has ever shown an interest in thinking about spiritual things and who isn't a hard line fundamentalist,

give them the invite and say you would love to see them there! There is no fee for the class, no pre-reading required and nothing you need to know ahead of time, it is all part of the class. I have taught this to groups of Pagans, UUs, Atheists and liberal Christians and so far it has always been well received, so I am excited to offer it again here and I hope it can be a good evangelism tool for us! All anyone has to do to attend is email me at dr.claudia.hall@gmail.com for the Zoom link. We have folks from all 4 area UU churches coming so it should be a really nice group.

Also coming up this month are Flower Communion on Sunday March 24 and Easter on March 31. Stay tuned for more details on those services in the weekly email. Happy Spring and New Life everyone!

Blessed Be, Claudia



MEUUC Hospitality Team Volunteers Needed in MARCH!

There is a signup sheet onsite at church but feel free to email [Peg Flach](mailto:Peg_Flach) at any time if you'd like to volunteer to ...

- arrive early to help set up the sanctuary space
- break down the sanctuary space after the service
- *set out the feather sign and signs on Cottonwood Rd
- *set up the front desk
- *greet guests as they arrive
- (*one person could do all three of these tasks)



Jeff and Nancy Reed signed the MEUUC membership book on Sunday, February 25. If you've not yet met them, please introduce yourself and make them feel a part of our congregation.

President's Column

Well my friends...it has been a pretty busy few months. We have begun doing outreach and activities in the community. We hosted a workshop by Aminata Cairo and also hosted an event to discuss the role of religion and politics based on the work of Heather Cox Richardson. As time goes on, we are attracting more people to our new location and are truly empowered to focus on our mission rather than building maintenance. Look for more events in the coming months as we stand tall and take our place in the Metro East.

I'm thinking myself about my four-year journey here as congregational President. When I took over in August 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, so much was up in the air regarding membership, social justice activities, and building maintenance. We did what we could to keep us all afloat. I noticed recently, I am breathing more deeply and clearly as we are finally settling in to a great, new routine. I'll be reflecting on my time as President over the next few months in preparation of handing the reins over to Alex. I think keeping us afloat and in a good financial position is the thing about which I am most proud. After our embezzlement, things looked bleak when the Board resigned en masse and our minister left. With the help of our amazing Board, we were able to keep us moving forward (reminds me of the song from Emma's Revolution) and we came out of the pandemic more financially stable than we were when it began. I am also proud we have kept our congregants safe from the pandemic. Some might complain we have been perhaps too cautious, but I

believe there is no social justice when people don't feel safe coming to church. We have worked hard to accommodate all and keeping everyone safe and sound through a precarious time!

I will reiterate again, how grateful I am for all of you who have continued to step up and support our church! We changed our name to reflect our status as a CONGREGATION, not as just a building...a church. Dee Evans shared her perspective on this several months ago and that message really stuck with me. We are the people, not the building.

And speaking of buildings, Alex has asked me to take on the responsibility of finding us a new permanent home and I will begin work on that later this spring, although I have been sniffing around here and there to try to think more creatively about options for us!

It seems the groundhog was right and spring is upon us...relax...enjoy...get outside and breathe deeply! It's a beautiful world, even if it feels a bit chaotic at times!

Love and Light,

Robyn



New Name Tags

If you would like to have a magnetic name tag made, please fill out the blue Name Tag Request card found on

the Information Table in the fellowship hall at the Lodge and put the card in the marked basket. This is for people just starting to attend, and for people who already have other forms of name tags.

UU Friends Facebook Group

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



REMINDER

March 3 and March 17 are CLEAN Sundays which means no beverages nor food. This is a temporary situation and will be re-evaluated each month.

On March 10, 24, 31 **there will be refreshments** served starting 15 minutes after the service concludes. Masking is optional during this refreshment time.

Official Legal Name Change

On September 24, 2023 the members of the First Unitarian Church of Alton approved a change of name to Metro East Unitarian Universalist Congregation. This name change became official on February 1, 2024 and an "Amended Affidavit of Incorporation" was recorded by the Madison County Recorder of Deeds. The original incorporation document was signed on July 1, 1949.



This is the RSVP link. The people who RSVP will be sent the link to the livestream. The time is Eastern time.



Hello everyone! Our little RE program is growing all the time! We are focused this month on justice as a theme. We will be defining justice, talking about the difference between justice and fairness, and exploring the ways justice relates to democracy and the democratic process. We will also be beginning to plan our Spring social justice activity.

School-aged children will continue to meet on the first and third Sundays of the month. They will begin in the sanctuary and be sung out to their class with their teachers. Masks are required for RE class while our infection rates are high, as we will be meeting on CLEAN Sundays. Kids are encouraged to keep their mask week to week by decorating a paper bag and leaving their mask at the church. We care for the Earth!

Make sure to see Jennifer Lewis to get your child registered for this fun and educational class!

We are also interested in expanding our RE offerings next church year, so if you are interested in being on the RE committee, teaching a class (even just once in a while), or working with our young people, please see Jennifer Lewis to volunteer. All our participants must get a background check from the church and be trained on our two-adult safety measures.

Thank you,
The Children's RE Committee



**Anna D Sparks
Women's Alliance**

**Thursday, March 7,
2024
11:30 a.m.**

At the end of our February meeting we agreed on another new restaurant, this time in Alton: **Chapala Grill (and Tequila Bar)** inside the Best Western Hotel at College and Homer Adams Parkway. The easiest way to reach it is from College to the parking lot then the single level entrance connected to the hotel to the right of the hotel itself.

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

3559 B College Avenue
Alton, IL 62002
618-474-8265

Sandy writes, "I've eaten there several times since finding this local gem and found their dishes to be delicious with very generous portions. My suggestion is to be prepared to eat some and take some home with you. I've made a reservation and would like RSVP emails so I can ensure the seating." RSVP to [Sandy](#).

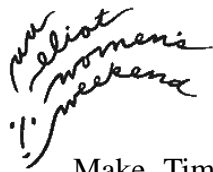


**Men's
Lunch
Group
Thursday,
March 14
11:30 a.m.**

In March, the men will meet at the Global Brew Tap House in Edwardsville. The address is 2329 Plum Street.

<https://edwardsville.globalbrew.com/food>

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



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



<https://www.uua.org/ga> This is the link to everything you need to know about this year's virtual UUA General Assembly, June 20 – June 23. Early bird registration is \$280 if done by March 15.

CHURCH CONTACTS

2023-2024 church year

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

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Instagram: firstuualton

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