

Metro East Unitarian Universalist Congregation Focus February 2025



*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>. A "coffee hour" follows every service. Religious Education for PreK – Youth, and care for younger children is provided each Sunday.



February 2 @ 10 a.m.

Speakers: Robyn Berkley, Peg Flach, Sayer Johnson

Title: *"Burning Bowl Fire Communion"*

Summary: A ritual to bid farewell to the old year, and to release it. In a ceremony of the burning bowl, people are invited to write down words, or a phrase, to sum up what they wish to release before entering the new year. They then come forward to burn that piece of paper.

**RE classes – PreK, elementary, and youth.
Childcare for children younger than PreK.**

February 9 @ 10 a.m.

Speaker: Nikki Short

Title: *"Love like a Revolutionary: Lessons from radical Genius."*

Summary: A discussion about Love from a black liberation perspective from the great bell hooks. Revolutionaries do it scared.

**RE classes – PreK, elementary, and youth.
Childcare for children younger than PreK.**

February 16 @ 10 a.m.

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: *"Love at the Center"*

**RE classes – PreK, elementary, and youth.
Childcare for children younger than PreK.**

February 23 @ 10 a.m.

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Claudia Hall

Title: "Challenges of Continual Revelation"

**RE classes – PreK, elementary, and youth.
Childcare for children younger than PreK.**

POTLUCK LUNCH – Please bring something to share.



Rev. Claudia's Letter

Hello everyone! As I write this, we just had our mid-year meeting, and the major focus for us for the next 6 months (and beyond) is how we

can be a welcoming sanctuary to folks who are threatened by the current administration.

As a church we are guided by love and justice, and our church has specialized in issues of disability and queer inclusion and justice, which are guiding our decisions about buildings and moving.

This doesn't mean, though, that we don't support other needs! In this newsletter you will find information about the local overnight warming center and hot meals being provided to those who are unhoused in our community, an invitation to a reproductive justice book study, and more.

As I said last Sunday, we might not have the power to change what is happening in Washington, but we DO have the power to change things in our sphere of influence. If you are someone in danger because of this administration, then being here at church, in a community that loves and supports you, where you can be your authentic self IS real resistance. Being happy and cared for by people who love you IS resistance. Thriving despite everything they are trying to do to us IS resistance. Lots of times folks forget that joy can be a profound resistance.

And for anyone who has extra capacity, check out the things that www.UUANI.org is doing. They work on everything from voting rights to climate actions, all from the perspective of our UU values.

Finally, MEUUC needs land- quickly! While we are so very grateful to the Masonic Brothers for allowing us to be in their space, anyone who was there Sunday and had to stand to eat at the potluck because we ran out of chairs can attest that we are officially out of space. What a great problem to have!

As a church we can go anywhere in the area so let's look in residential areas as well as commercial space. **We need 2+ acres, (emphasis on the +), and the cheaper the better.** We have \$200,000 to buy land with, but the less we spend on land the more we can spend on the building before having to take out a mortgage or the like (*no final decision on building financing has been made, but whatever is done it'll be better if we have more cash available*).

If you find any lots, please email them to me at dr.claudia.hall@gmail.com and I'll put them all into a file until Jessie is recovered from surgery and the new property committee is ready to go.

These are terrifying and thrilling times, all jumbled together. Lean on each other and when you find someone else as scared and stressed and vulnerable as you are, invite them in because we're better together than apart. We need each other today and in the years to come. May love lead our way forward always. Amen and blessed be.

The Bible for Liberals continues!

In February we tackle the Enlightenment and how it, and the introduction of Historical-Critical Method, radically changed Biblical Interpretation.

The class will meet from 6:30-8 PM Central time on Zoom, on the 3rd and 4th Tuesdays of the month - Feb 18 & 25

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83999230532?pwd=uUuU2PgC5lYw2AYa6sZMOepDVsnbd.1>

Meeting ID: 839 9923 0532

Passcode: 126049



General Assembly: The Unitarian Universalist Association's Premier Annual Gathering – will be held in Baltimore June 18 – 22. For

more info about registration, programs, housing, volunteering, and costs go to <http://uua.org/ga>.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Religious Education Classes for February

If you are interested in working with our children in the RE program, please contact [Jennifer Lewis](#).

Elementary Class

2/2/25 Confucianism
2/9/25 Taoism
2/16/25 Taoism
2/23/25 Generosity (JETPIG) – Combined class

Youth Class

2/2/25 Islam 1: Peace by Surrender
2/9/25 Islam2: Contemporary Issues
2/16/25 Valentine's Day Acts of Kindness
2/23/25 Generosity (JETPIG) – Combined class

Sunday Volunteers

Peg Flach has designed a new and improved system for volunteers called **"If I'm There."** If you are at church on a Sunday and want to help with needed tasks, check out the "clothes pin" to do list. Choose what you'd like to do, do it, and then move the clothes pin from To Do to Done! If you want to volunteer in advance, contact Peg at pegflach@gmail.com.

Masons' Calendar as of January 28, 2025

More things might be added to their calendar as February progresses. The current calendar only indicates that the Masons will be meeting on Thursday, February 6.

At this point we will need to –
February 2 Take Down; February 9 Set Up.

A little Masonic Trivia – From Peg Flach.

"Gee, what's that circle with a "G" behind the pulpit symbolize?" It may not totally be what you thought. The letter "G" in Freemasonry encapsulates the essence of Masonic teachings. Representing both Geometry and God, it bridges the gap between the material and the spiritual, the scientific and the divine. The round "G" that we



see, however, isn't as typical as this form. For a more in-depth dive, go to

<https://ilmason.org/our-blog/meaningletter-g-freemasonry>

Your moment of UU Zen So now you know.



Care and Concern

Jessie Dominick will have surgery on Friday, 1/31. She will be recuperating at Joanne Berry's house. We can help out by providing some meals for Joanne and her husband. Jessie will be on a liquid diet initially. This immediate need is being handled separately, with updates to follow as Jessie recovers.

The MealTrain.com website coordinates a meal plan. The link is below.

[Meal Train for Jessie Dominick recuperating at Joanne Berry's House](#)

1. Pick a date on the calendar for your meal drop off.
2. Specify what you are going to bring for the main course.
3. Jessie appreciates having a quiet place to recuperate. Thanks to Joanne for welcoming Jessie into her home. Any meals ease this overall recovery process.

Sincerely,

Brian Semmler and Mary Weber



To help us get better acquainted with each other we are including autobiographies of some of the new folks in our congregation.

Aimee Villet

I'm originally from Massachusetts and moved to the area in 2019. I am the Youth Services Director at the Glen Carbon Centennial Library District. I've been a librarian for 15 years. I have two cats, Shippo and Kilala who have helped me through some rough years. I love stories in all formats, whether it be books, movies/series, podcasts, video games or spoken word. My other passions include dancing, food (but not cooking), spending time with friends, exploring new places, and working out.

My first interaction with the church was at Alton Pride. I then googled the church at the start of 2024 hoping to find community. As a transplant with no family in the area, I've realized I need a better support system. I felt immediately welcome and at home on my first visit. As someone with no specific faith system other than a belief in kindness and equity for all, I was very happy to find my lack of religious beliefs wasn't judged.

Keith Davis

Hey there! I'm Keith, though most people around here know me as Vinny's dad. The joyful energy of this congregation won me over from my very first visit — the "babies are going to baby, and that's okay!" message said it all.

My partner Nicki and I have shared 18 wonderful years together, first meeting as Airborne Language Analysts in the Air Force. That role took us across three continents before we returned to my roots here in Southern Illinois — though my brother insists I really live in the Metro East, not SoI!

These days, I work in management consulting and talent development, helping adults grow their professional skills. When I'm not working or chasing after Vinny, you'll find me geeking out over computer projects, rolling dice in tabletop games, dusting off retro gaming consoles, biking, or deep into a good book.

As a queer, atheist humanist, I've often struggled to feel fully at home in spiritual spaces. But my experiences with UU congregations in Omaha and Honolulu reminded me how powerful a truly welcoming, values-driven community can be. I'm so grateful to have found that same spirit here — a place where I can bring my whole, authentic self, explore life's big questions, and help foster equity, justice, and transformation.

Eden Johnson (they/he) **Pastoral Assistant @ MEUUC**

Eden is originally from the lands of the Cherokee and Muscogee people also known as Atlanta, Ga. Eden holds a BA in Religious Studies, a Masters in Divinity from Boston University School of Theology and a certificate of Spiritual Direction from Still Harbor in politicized healing.

After graduating they started his own spiritual direction company, meeting with clients and organizing at the intersection of art, post traumatic healing for the LGBTQIA+ community, and storytelling. With his partner Elijah Anthony, they started a LGBTQIA+ and majority neurodivergent youth group in Boston and facilitated it for two years after graduating until Eli got a call to serve as the Outward Pastor at Metropolitan Community Church of Greater Saint Louis.

After moving to the Tower Grove area, Eden has been serving as the Youth Pastor at an interdenominational youth group and enjoys organizing art events, nature walks, and service opportunities. He found out about MEUUC through his partner's colleague at MCCGSL, Rev. Lauren, and her connection to Rev. Dr. Claudia.

Eden is attracted to the overall warmth of MEUUC's love centered, justice minded, and deeply caring community. Eden is excited to bring their passion for spiritual transformation, creativity, and warm heart to share in the good work MEUUC already is doing in its ministry. Eden enjoys cuddling with his cats Bella and Jimi, making macrame lamps, and finding trees to hug on their hikes.

A Game Night is being planned for some time in February. Watch your emails for more information about date and time.

Anna Ds Women's Alliance
Luncheon
Thursday, February 6
11:30 a.m.
Castelli's Restaurant
3400 Fosterburg Rd., Alton



<https://www.castellis255.com/>

RSVP to [Sandy Shaner](#).

As a reminder: keep an eye on the weather and your emails as we get closer to our planned winter lunch dates because we'll cancel if it is, or promises to become, unsafe to travel unnecessarily.



MEN'S LUNCH GROUP
Thursday, February 13
11:30 a.m.

Location information to be sent out by email.

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

Steps to Becoming a Member of the MEUUC Congregation

If you are interested in becoming a member of this congregation, please speak with Rev. Claudia about the path to membership.

Book Discussion

UU Church of Champaign-Urbana Invites you to join us as we read and discuss a reproductive justice book selection, "**Trust Women**," by Rebecca Todd Peters. We will meet once or twice a month for a couple of months starting in February. The date has not yet been set, but will be chosen by input from the registrants.

Register here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSea-u5M8JUBnc0MCMlijVKuOohLFI_weEK48njy5heieLqYqw/viewform?usp=header

The book we will be reading is:

Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice

by Rebecca Todd Peters, Beacon Press, 2018.

Shamanic Drumming

Our friends at Unity invite us to join them at 7:00 p.m. Friday, January 31st at the **Unity Spiritual Center at 700 W Clay St in Collinsville** for an evening of Shamanic Drumming. *Keith's wife (and Vincent's mom), Nicki, is one of the leaders at Unity and we are hoping our congregations might get to work together on projects with shared values. Stay tuned for more invites from them in the months to come.* Check out their Facebook page "Unity Spiritual Center" for more information.

Volunteer Opportunities in the Community

Friday Food & Fellowship

Help prepare and serve a meal that is open to anyone in downtown Edwardsville

Contact Penny pennym1957@yahoo.com or call 618-656-4648

When: Fridays once a month 11 to 1:30

Where: Immanuel United Methodist Church
800 N. Main St, Edwardsville

Menu: Hospitality, Community, and FOOD!



Cost: \$00.00 (plus tax) **FREE!**



**ALTON AND EDWARDSVILLE
OVERNIGHT
WARMING
LOCATIONS**

WHERE:

- Deliverance Temple, 1125 E. 6TH ST. IN ALTON,
- 1st Baptist Church, 534 ST. LOUIS ST. IN EDWARDSVILLE,
- And Mt. Zion Church, 2827 Mockingbird Lane in Granite City

WHEN:

THE OWL WILL ACTIVATE FROM 5PM TO 8:30 AM
WHENEVER OVERNIGHT TEMPS ARE PREDICTED TO
DROP TO 20 DEGREES OR BELOW

WATCH RIVERBENDER.COM/WEATHER OR CALL 618-465-4545

JOIN US:

VOLUNTEER AT bit.ly/serveOWL
DONATE AT bit.ly/donateOWL
LEARN MORE AT FACEBOOK.COM/OVERNIGHTWARMINGLOCATIONS
CONTACT US AT OVERNIGHTWARMINGLOCATIONS@GMAIL.COM



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

Metro East Unitarian Universalist Congregation

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

Instagram: meuucglencarbon

[Click here to see this month's calendar](#)

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