



The Messenger

FIRST UNITARIAN

Albuquerque • East Mountains • Socorro

January 2021

January's Theological Theme Is Imagination.



This past year gave me time to imagine the future. Some of what I imagined was frightening, coming out of anxiety about what was going to happen to my family, my church, my country, and my planet. I'm sure I wasn't alone in my sleepless nights.

Now that 2021 is here, there is more hope. As I write this, the first Covid-19 vaccines are being given to our healthcare workers and national health experts are telling us we can expect a life closer-to-normal sometime this year. Democracy appears to be holding strong and, later this month, our country will inaugurate a leader who has pledged to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord, reversing four years of regressive policies.

There's reason to imagine a brighter future for First Unitarian, too. While the virtual world has made church less accessible for some, it has also connected us in some beautiful new ways. How many more people can we include now because of virtual meeting options? Imagine someone who was unable to get to church for an evening meeting because of a lack of transportation or childcare; a church member you know who is homebound because of disability, illness, or age; a visitor who—for whatever reason—was anxious or uncertain about walking through our doors for the first time. Continuing to offer virtual services and meetings helps create an inclusive, welcoming church for everyone.

We've had 31 members join our church at virtual ceremonies since the pandemic began, and I expect that trend to continue into 2021. One of my jobs as Director of Membership is helping these new members find their place in our community through activities, groups, and volunteering.

So. Let's imagine the return to our in-person services on Sunday mornings. How do we create and maintain our community and connections with each other, and ensure people who have only met online feel at home together in our sanctuary? One big idea I've been exploring since before the pandemic began would reimagine how we structure our volunteers: creating "Hospitality Teams," an idea other large UU churches have adopted with great success.

Imagine joining a team of volunteers who work together one Sunday every 6-8 weeks with the goal of creating Radical Hospitality for everyone who walks in our front door. Everyone is cross-trained across Sunday duties so no one *has* to do the same thing each time, and there is always someone available to fill in for absences. New members are encouraged to join teams as their first volunteer activity at the church, allowing them to immediately feel included and make friends. In churches that have adopted this model, it has built community connections and cut down on volunteer burnout. **Hospitality truly becomes the work of the entire congregation.**

I love this idea, but I can't make it happen alone. It matters what you think. Send me an email at the address below and let me know. I want to hear what you are imagining for the year ahead.

Happy 2021 to you all!

Laura Magnusson
Director of Membership & Communications
LMags@uuabq.org

Worship Calendar

Go to www.zoom.us to set up your free account, download the app to your computer or smart device, and select "Join a Meeting." You can also call in without a computer or smart device to (669) 900-6833 and, when prompted, enter the meeting number.

Virtual Worship

Sundays at 11:00 am

Led by our ministers and music director, all of our Zoom worship services are intergenerational, and contain a message for all ages as well as music and a homily.

Enter Meeting ID: 168 223 701 or [click here](#).

Virtual Vespers

Wednesdays at 7:00 pm

These short (25-minute) services offer a midweek respite with readings, music, meditation, and prayer. Small-group conversations are also offered after each service.

Enter Meeting ID: 593 831 292 or [click here](#).

January 3

"Spiritual Imagination"

The Rev. Angela Herrera

Whether we are inspired by science, ancient stories, or our own experiences of transcending mystery and wonder, imagination plays a big role in our understanding of ultimate reality and our place in it.

January 10

"Religious Imagination"

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

Unitarian Universalism is the result of courageous acts of religious imagination. Our tradition went from looking a lot like other mainline Protestant denominations to the vibrant and evolving religion that we are today. Rev. Bob will talk about a few of the amazing people who helped us get here.

January 17

"MLK's Gift & Challenge"

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

On this MLK weekend, we'll honor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and also reckon with what his message means to us today. Spoiler: It's not what you think.

January 24

"Being Born"

The Rev. Angela Herrera & Olivia Herrera

Although every person on earth was born, the subject of birth is conspicuously absent from religious art and literature. Angela (a former doula) and her daughter Olivia, a nurse at Dar a Luz birth center, will reflect on this, and on what being present with birth has taught them.

January 31

"Eulogies"

The Ministers & Musicians

The popular, annual service dedicated to notable people who died in the last year. Though 2020 brought so much grief, let us not forget to celebrate some of the regular people whose lives touched ours, even if we never knew their names. Inventors, activists, scientists, and more... come for good music and good stories; leave with a spring in your step.

Angela will also pass the ceremonial Key to the Church to Bob today, as this is her last service before leaving for a four-month sabbatical.

To read the sabbatical news in last month's Messenger, [click here](#).

We Light a Candle

- **We light candles for Janelle Campbell and for Norma Ruptier**, beloved members who both died on Christmas Eve. We hold Norma's husband George, and all of Norma and Janelle's friends and loved ones in our hearts.
- **We grieve with Chuckie McHenry** as she mourns the death of her sister Janice.
- **We hold Kathy Peterson in our hearts** as she grieves the death of her husband.
- **We send healing thoughts to Sara Maley** as she recovers from surgery.
- **We hold Theresa Watson in our care** as she grieves the deaths of her beloved beagle companions.
- **We light a celebratory candle for Linda and Richard Avery**, who celebrated their 50th anniversary in December.

If you're experiencing difficulties, health issues, or transitions, you can reach out to our Caring Network at caring@uuabq.org.

Community News

Membership Milestones

A warm welcome to our newest members, who joined the church in December!

- Jeff Dixon
- Kenny Jones
- Betsy Kruger
- Linda Smith

Happy Membership Anniversary to the following members of our community:

One Year

- Mack & Marian Davis
- Judi LaFleur
- Tim Nisly
- Sarah & Tom Peterson
- Melanie Rubin
- Pat Simons & Rusty Vaughn

Five Years

- Melissa Falkenstern & Andrew Mullen
- Sherry Hatalsky
- Tara McCaughin
- Leanne Ogletree

Ten Years

- Jake Barkdoll & Linda Suydam
- Kay Bocian
- Mary & Stephen Moskal
- Phil Zelle

Fifteen Years

- Bonne Cleveland

Twenty-Five Years

- Gordon & Molly Faulkner

Thirty Years

- Kate Harrington

Fifty Years!

- Suzanne Visor

Are You Ready to Join the Church? We will have our next virtual joining ceremony on **Sunday, February 7 at 12:15 pm**. If you have not done so yet, please fill out an [“I’m Ready to Join” form on our website](#) under “Connect—Becoming a Member.” We will confirm your attendance and send you the information to log in for the ceremony.

ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday, January 31
2:00 pm
on ZOOM
[MEETING ID:168 223 701](#)

Let’s Finish Strong!

This has been a difficult year, and we hope that you and yours are doing as well as possible in the pandemic. Many folks have drawn support and consolation from this congregation over the past months. Sometimes this support was spiritual, in the form of worship services or pastoral care, and other times it was material support, perhaps from our food pantry or financial support. **Your pledge helps make this possible and we’re hoping that we can count on you to keep it going into 2021.**

You can pledge online at our web site here:

<http://uuabq.com/2021-pledge-drive/>.

Thanks for supporting this faith community. **We’re stronger together.**



Grief Support Group

Every year, the holiday season so poignantly reminds us of the loved ones we have lost through death. Many in our beloved congregation are grieving the deaths of beloved spouses, partners, family members, or friends. The pandemic isolation has made it much harder for us to comfort one another as we would have even a year ago. **Starting February 23, our First Unitarian Care Team is offering a weekly six-session Grief Support Group on Tuesdays at 6:30 pm over Zoom.** The group—with two facilitators and six to eight participants—will provide a supportive environment for anyone experiencing personal grief with companionship, support, information, and activities to assist with your unique grief journey. Experience tells us that you will be best served by this opportunity 6-36 months after the death. If you think you will benefit from this kind of support, please consider registering for the spring session by emailing Caring@uuabq.org or by leaving a message with Jess in the congregation office at 505-705-3549. We will want your name, phone, and email contact information at the time you sign up. **Remember: We are better together!**

Community News

Wildlife Habitat Wrought Iron Fence

Installation of a new wrought iron fence around the Wildlife Habitat is anticipated to be completed by the end of December. The fence will enable the Landscape Committee to keep the Habitat safe and clean for outdoor events and for members and their children to enjoy. Many thanks to a generous church member for funding this installation.

Family Promise Update

Family Promise of Albuquerque is purchasing their own building on San Pedro! Since 2016, First Unitarian has partnered with Family Promise to house up to 4 families experiencing homelessness in our Social Hall for one week, four times a year. Their new building will house up to 8 families at a time, have office space, a computer lab, eating facilities, and a space for daytime services. Their fundraising goal of \$600K allows them to enter the building mortgage-free, and have funds to make minor renovations. Once the building has been completed and families are living there, First Unitarian will continue our work to support them in new exciting ways. Stay tuned! **Family Promise is a rainbow in the middle of a storm for these families.** If you wish to donate to Family Promise, please visit their website: www.familypromiseabq.org OR mail a check to:

***Family Promise of Albuquerque
808 Edith Blvd NE, 87102***

Thanks for your continued support of this vital program!

Board of Directors Update

In December, the board took its first look at the 2021 budget proposal that will be presented to the congregation in January. While we had prepared for a challenging year economically-speaking, church pledges were on par with recent years (thank you, members!) and—with changes in the church's finances due to the pandemic—we ended the year with a surplus that can be applied to some areas that have needed our financial attention for some time, like Campus Care, IT support and equipment, and support for our social justice work in the community. I'm confident we'll have a budget to present to the congregation that reflects our community's values.

The board also heard an update from the ARC Task Force. They are asking the right questions about church loans, ongoing maintenance and condition of the ARC building, and how purchase of the building would serve our church's mission. Task force members will be talking with church members about your ideas. I appreciate the co-leadership of Gwen Sawyer and George Bakula in taking a careful look at whether buying the building is in the best interest of our entire congregation.

Finally, the board spoke with our Senior Minister, Angela Herrera, about her performance in this trying year. We shared our appreciation for all she does for our congregation. Descriptions of her performance included words like “stellar,” “innovative,” and “magnificent.” Her innovative style was apparent this year when the pandemic hit and she pivoted to Zoom church so quickly, setting up a COVID task force, and more. We appreciate her solid working relationship with Bob LaVallee.

An area of concern is that—with the staff turnover in recent years—Angela is now the keeper of a lot of institutional knowledge, and has had to work hard to pass that along to new staff members. In fact, the board believes she is spending too many hours per week in her job. It was not lost on me that her job review occurred at 9 pm after she had already put in a 12-plus-hour day. Angela's working hours are not sustainable long-term.

As a congregation, we need to find ways to help her delegate to others on the staff or trusted volunteers. How can we, the congregation, help? The board and Angela discussed more volunteer help with the church's hiring processes, the board's Finance Committee, the congregation's Financial Review Committee, and leadership development. If you can step up in any of these areas or you know of someone who can, please contact me at boardpres@uuabq.org.

I wish all of you a restful holiday season and a Happy New Year!

- Heather Clark, President of the Congregation

Religious Education



From Our Director of Religious Education

"This may only be a dream of mine, but I think it can be made real." -Ella Baker



Greetings!

Last month, we explored Stillness. I find that to achieve a state of stillness, I must put the phone down, and turn off the constant input: music, notifications, and—even more challenging—the hamster wheel in my mind that constantly rotates with responsibilities, projects, and worries. What works for me is to be doing something with my hands: drawing, coloring, stitching. In that space, for me, imagination flourishes!

Who gets to imagine the future? Losing your imagination is one of the symptoms of trauma, and all of us have experienced some trauma this year, though admittedly, on a sliding scale.

But Change (with a capital C!) starts with imagination. We are being asked to use our imaginations a lot these days: imagining what will happen when COVID is finally over, imagining a new government, imagining an end to racism, imagining that we can heal our natural world. For big change to happen, we must all agree to be a part of it.

We are still coping with the scary challenges of the pandemic, and I pray that we are closer to imagining our world without it. But I hope that everything will not just return to the way it was. Not everything was working that well, and not everything we learned during the pandemic should be tossed out. How do we, who know the world needs to change, begin to practice something different?

**Mia Noren, Dre@uuabq.org
Director of Religious Education,
Credentialed**

RE Notes

I hope you have had a chance to check out the Bitmoji Resource Room. The Elementary Room changes every month, and you can find it on our First UU Families Facebook page or [on the church's website](#).

Zoom Meetings

Be sure to check out the [RE Calendar on our website](#) and the RE section of the Weekly Broadsheet for links and access to meeting information! Make sure you [register your family on our website](#) and contact Alana Rodriguez at reasst@uuabq.org if there are changes to your information, especially email. This is the only way we have to contact you.

Volunteering

I hear that families are just stretched to the limit these days. That's a big reason to change how we do things while we are meeting virtually. Now, more than ever, we want to show our children how a community shows up for each other—community is still “the curriculum.” Classes are shorter and simpler, and I still need you. Please connect with me if you think you can help!

Youth News



Imagination's great gift is improvement, or that's what we're usually taught. For instance, it's said that the deep magic of imagination lies in the way it can reshape our reality for the better. We're urged to imagine the world we dream of—a world with more justice, more peace, more love. From that, a mysterious magnetism pulls our imperfect present into an improved future. Imagination moves us forward. It makes us better.

But be careful, friends, and remember that this view of imagination impoverishes us by shutting out imagination's other precious gift: the illumination of our daily lives. Imagination can pull the sacred into our present, letting us perceive the common as miraculous and wonderful through its lens.

This month, our resources will be centered around messages of how our faith invites us to become a people of imagination. These include imagining a new you, imagining a better world, thinking outside the box, and visiting other worlds.

In addition to our weekly All Youth Check-In on Sunday afternoons, **we are starting our 2021 (Virtual) Coming of Age** class for any 8th and 9th graders who want to participate. This class explores what it means to be a spiritual adult in a UU community through games, discussion, learning, and fun. It ends with a special worship service in the spring, one of the most anticipated services of the year. Email me for more information or to register.

**Alana Rodriguez, youth@uuabq.org
Youth Programs Coordinator, RE Assistant**

Connect & Learn

Sunday Explorations

Join us every Sunday morning at 9:30 for discussion topics on spirituality, our wisdom sources, UU history and taking our faith into action to address concerns of these times.

Meeting ID: 842 4289 2753

Passcode: 041625

January 3 Imagine the New Year, 2021

The messages of imagination, including seeing the common as precious. What will you imagine for the new year? What can we imagine collectively?
Angela Merkert, facilitator

January 10 Listen to the Mustn'ts, Shouldn'ts and Don'ts of Shel Silverstein

How do they inhibit our imagination? Where do we begin to lower or dissolve those barriers? Let's identify sources of inspiration from which we develop the Must's, Should's, Shall's and Will-do's.
Angela Merkert, facilitator

January 17 The Post-Pandemic World

Imagining equity and inclusion in our social and economic lives. Where will our imagination take us in reversing policies and practices that limit more equity and inclusion?
Angela Merkert, facilitator

January 24 Thich Nhat Hanh: His Life and Teachings

Our text will be his book, "The Miracles of Mindfulness." We'll read/discuss his amazing life story and profound teachings on mindfulness and meditation, including his words "Life in the present is all we have."
Ron Friederich, facilitator

January 31 UUA Common Read 2020-

21 Breathe: A Letter to My Sons, Part 1 by Imani Perry Explore the terror, grace, and beauty of coming of age as a Black person in contemporary America and what it means to parent children in a persistently unjust world.
Angela Merkert, facilitator

Music Notes from Susan Peck



Our church's music ensembles are getting better and better at virtual music-making. [Email me](#) if you would like to participate vocally or instrumentally with Chalice Choir, Disparate Parts, or Sol Singers.

Sol Singers continue meeting every Monday evening for song circle, and are now hosting a Friday afternoon Zoom drop-in group for conversation and shared music.

Starting in January, we'll offer a chance to explore cutting edge technology for online music-making: Cy Shuster and I will be hosting a Jamulus group. Jamulus is free, open-source software designed to reduce time-lag and allow folks to make music together online in almost real time. It's tech-intensive, but musicians around the world are learning how to make it work.

Disparate Parts will honor musicians who passed in 2020 in our Jan 31 Eulogies service. We welcome musicians who enjoy playing and recording contemporary music. Musicians and poets are also welcome to honor those who passed in 2020 at our January 24 Virtual Open Mic.

*On the day we are together again
On the day we are together again
I will pull you in close like a hoop with no end
On the day we are together again*

[-Siri Undlin, aka Humbird](#)



UU 101 - Back By Popular Demand!

Great news! Rev. Bob LaVallee will be offering a virtual UU 101 session for anyone who wants to learn more about what it

means to be a Unitarian Universalist today. The two-hour class will be offered **Saturday, January 30 at 11:00 am** with a lunch break.

To register email Bob at blavallee@uuabq.org or contact our Director of Membership, Laira Magnusson, at LMags@uuabq.org.

Groups & Activities



Join us for Meet & Greet, an opportunity, on Zoom, to meet with 6-8 other members and friends for a social hour and a half. Participants are invited to enjoy a beverage of their choosing and nibbles if they like. We start with some 'ice breaker' questions and go-with-the-flow from there. If you are looking for a way to just kick back and socialize—with old friends and new—give it a try! **Our next meeting is Saturday, February 6 at 7:00 pm.** If you are interested or have questions, contact Linda Skye at (505) 401-5989 or Lskye@unm.edu.

New Year's Wisdom Circle

As we gladly leave 2020 behind and turn the corner into the new year, we of ripe years will gather around our Zoom table to take stock and talk. Rather than make the usual self-improvement resolutions, we will consider what feeds our souls, what challenges us, and how we integrate these two poles of being human in the 21st century under present conditions. Along with that, we'll play visionaries and share one thing we foresee for ourselves personally in the year ahead, and one thing we foresee for the world around us. **All are welcome to join us Saturday, January 16 at 10:30 am.** If so inclined, bring along something delightful to sip and nibble on. Email Jerilyn Bowen at jbowen1@unm.edu for more information.

[Click here to join](#) or enter **Meeting ID: 962 2094 2211, Passcode: 485006.**

Addiction Recovery Resources

Do you know someone struggling with gambling, workaholism, compulsive video gaming, or problematic Internet use, including porn use? Has COVID isolation exacerbated any of these behaviors for you or a loved one? The First Unitarian Addiction Recovery (AR) Ministry offers support for these and other issues such as alcoholism and opiate abuse. There is an answer to the pain and suffering of addiction. The AR Ministry can connect you with support and relief.

With Zoom and tele-meetings, there are 12-Step

fellowships within easy reach, including Gamblers Anonymous, Computer Gaming Addicts Anonymous, and Sex & Love Addicts Anonymous. There are low- or no-cost options to help you or a loved one get started, reclaiming time, energy, and your life! If you or someone close to you may have issues around an addictive behavior, including internet-related addictions, please reach out to a member of the AR Ministry team by contacting us right away at caring@uuabq.org for confidential support and a pathway to recovery.



Bread, Wine, and Book Club will meet **Friday, January 8 at 7:00 pm** on Zoom. We will be discussing *A Place for Us* by Fatima Farheen Mirza. Contact Martha Beyerlein at martha.beyerlein@comcast.net for the meeting information.

The Monday Afternoon Book Club will meet **Monday, January 18, at 1:30 pm** on Zoom. The book is *White Houses* by Amy Bloom. Please contact Joyce Etheridge at 509-308-5523 for further information.

The Nonfiction Book Club continues to meet on Zoom **Wednesdays at 2:00 pm.** We are currently reading *Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies of a Silicon Valley Startup* by John Carreyrou. For meeting information, contact Bob Wood at 352-0212 or roberttwood@gmail.com.

Reading on Racism Book Group's selection for January is *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap* by Mehrsa Baradaran. Our meeting is **January 27, 3:00—5:00 pm.** To join us and receive the Zoom link, please contact Kent Madden at revmadden22@gmail.com.



First Unitarian

A Unitarian Universalist Congregation
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www.uuabq.org 505-884-1801

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- DATED MATERIAL -

Calling All Church Group Leaders!

Are you interested in learning about Realm, our new web-based membership system, and how it can help streamline your group's communication?

Contact our Church Administrator, Jess Bess, at admin@uuabq.org to learn more!