Getting Real with Virtual Services

A moving worship service is vastly different than plopping down on the couch and firing up the iPad. It’s a journey that we make both individually and together, externally and internally.

Think about the steps we would do to prepare for in-person services. We looked ahead to check the sermon topic. We would likely greet people as we walked to the building. As we walked through the foyer, we became more calm and centered. We remembered that we belong to a church that welcomes and nurtures spiritual growth. As we entered the sanctuary, we finished our transition from secular to sacred space. We set aside the swirl and buzz of constant distraction and were able to focus on what is deeper and more meaningful.

We do not have to lose this in virtual services. Most of the above is really a journey we make inside. We can look forward to the comforting pattern of the familiar order of service. We can make a spot in our homes a more spiritual space by removing distractions and replacing them with symbols that are meaningful to us, like photos, mementos, or a home chalice. These don’t need to be fancy—what is important is that they are meaningful to each of us.

If possible, plan to use a desktop or laptop computer for the service. These have much better images and sound than tablets and smartphones. Try customizing your view to hide the chat video thumbnails or the chat window. Feel free to contact me at cpaul@uuabq.org if you would like help with this.

On Sunday morning, give yourself a few minutes in the special place you have prepared. Plan to join the virtual service lobby about 20 minutes before the service to chat in the Zoom lobby. As the lobby roll and countdown to the service begin, take a breath and center yourself. As the service starts, gently move your focus into it. Take in the words and think about them. Sing along with the songs. Post in the chat. Don’t be tempted to check a sports score or other distracting sites—this is a special time that only comes once a week.

After the service, join a breakout room. The minister will often provide an interesting idea to discuss there. Take a moment to transition back to the outside world. Hopefully these steps will help you bring a little of the sacred with you.

Chris Paul
Technical Arts Director

Advising Rev. Bob

The work of this church is a work we do together, and our ministers don’t go it alone. If you have feedback about Rev. Bob LaVallee’s ministry, insight, and/or comments about how he is doing, please send it to a member of his Advisory Committee (listed below). This feedback will help guide the work of this church, and it will help LaVallee’s Advisory Committee write their evaluation for the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee in the fall. Because we are all in covenant, we ask that anyone offering feedback tell us who they are. Members: Larry Alei (alei_79@yahoo.com), Kelsey Atherton (kelsey.d.atherton@gmail.com), Judy Goering (goering1951@yahoo.com), Gil Gutierrez (nvomxo@hotmail.com), and Carla Williams (toosnoop@yahoo.com).
Worship Calendar for April

Go to [www.zoom.us](http://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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtual Worship</th>
<th>Virtual Vespers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sundays at 11:00 am</td>
<td>Wednesdays at 7:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>These short (25-minute) services offer a midweek respite with readings, music, meditation, and prayer. Small-group conversations are offered after each service. Enter Meeting ID: 168 223 701 or <a href="http://www.zoom.us">click here</a>. Enter Meeting ID: 593 831 292 or <a href="http://www.zoom.us">click here</a>.</td>
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April 4: Easter Sunday

6:35 am Sunrise Service
A contemplative service of music and readings created and led by the First Unitarian Worship Coordinators. Greet the sun!

11:00 am “O, Easter!”
*The Rev. Bob LaVallee*
We will use the poetry/prayer form of antiphon (each stanza beginning “O,...”) throughout the service to name our longings and gratitudes. Although the form has roots in Christian worship, this service is designed to have universal appeal.

April 11

“What Widening the Circle of Concern”
*The Rev. Leslie Takahashi, Guest Minister*
Rev. Takahashi is the lead Minister of the Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, a position she has held since 2015. She has been active in many volunteer roles in the UUA, UUMA and at the local level, where she participates now as part of the Faith in Action East Bay justice network. Her work has been published in many anthologies and she is the primary author of *The Arc of the Universe Is Long: Unitarian Universalism and the Journey Towards Wholeness* and of “Widening the Circle of Concern: The report of the Commission on Institutional Change.” She is the mother of two children and two bully breed pups and loves walking, water, and gardening.

April 18

“Becoming Free: Our Worth Is Inherent”
*The Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom, Guest Minister*
What would it feel like to let go of our toxic attachments to things? What could it look like to collectively let go of the mirage of endless growth and the cycle of consumption? Join us for this Earth Day celebration where we explore the possibilities of liberation from excessive production and consumption through remembering our inherent worth.

*The Reverend Jennifer Nordstrom is the Senior Minister of the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukeee, where she preaches, teaches, and organizes for social justice. In 2018, the book she co-edited, *Justice on Earth: People of Faith Working at the Intersections of Race, Class and the Environment*, was published and chosen as the Unitarian Universalist Association’s national Common Read.*

April 25

Coming of Age
*The Rev. Bob LaVallee with Kelsey Atherton, Meara Christopher, and Meghan Shattuck*
The Coming of Age program at First Unitarian is designed to help our youth develop and articulate their personal theologies. Come hear the spiritual wisdom of some wonderful young folks in our community.

We Light a Candle

We send healing thoughts to Geri Knoebel as she continues to recover from surgery in March.

We hold Becky Steele in our care while she recovers at home from a car accident.

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

A warm welcome to our newest members, who joined (or rejoined!) the church in March!

Andrea & Jennifer De Angelo  
Debi & Jerry Goyer  
Victoria Rosquist  
Sandra Schroeder  

Happy Membership Anniversary to the following members of our community:

**Five Years**

Nick Jaramillo  
Deblyn McCaughin  

**Ten Years**

Stirling Crow  
Brian Long  
Pam Olsen  
Bob Wood  

**Fifteen Years**

Kathi Foy  
Kerrie Gorrell  
Melissa & Rick Kennedy  

**Twenty Years**

Wendy Simms-Small  
Merak Spielman  

**Forty-five Years**

Gerald Shelton  

**Sixty-four Years!**

Sally New  

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**Are You Ready to Join the Church?** We will have our next virtual joining ceremony on **Sunday, April 11 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.”

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**All-Member Virtual Art Show**

The Arts & Aesthetics Committee invites you to view our first-ever All-Member Virtual Art Show, now hosted on our website! The show contains over 30 pieces submitted by ten church member artists, including painting, photography, mosaic tile, and mixed media sculpture. Thirty percent of artists’ sales will be donated to First U. Go to [www.uuabq.org](http://www.uuabq.org) and click “Virtual Art Gallery” on the top menu to start looking!

**The Importance of Story in Recovery**

If you are recovering or working on recovering, your story is powerful because:

• It affirms what we have been through and helps us confirm that we don’t want to return to addictive behavior.

• It allows others to know us, and allows us a sense of belonging in a recovery community.

• It helps us know those parts of us that we may have been keeping secret from ourselves.

• As they say, “we’re only as sick as our secrets,” which doesn’t mean that we tell everyone, but does mean that someone else knows the things that caused us so much shame that we engaged in our addiction to feel better.

• Sharing our story may be the first time someone else hears the same behaviors that they have engaged in related to their addiction. It gives them hope that they can recover too.

• Isolation is the core of addiction. Sharing our story ends the isolation for us and for others who hear our story.

If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction and you would like some support, please contact the office or email [recovery@uuabq.org](mailto:recovery@uuabq.org).  

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**Are You New to First U?**

We have found one of the best ways to feel truly connected to our community is to join a small discussion group, so **New to First U Connections** is just for you! We meet once a month on the **first Tuesday at 7:00 pm, with our next meeting April 6.** Meeting ID: 823 9345 8787 /Passcode: 681977
Music Notes With Susan Peck

Our musicians at First U are still valiantly working with technologic solutions to making music together. Chalice Choir will debut their latest virtual choir video on Easter Sunday, the beautiful *Set Me As a Seal* by René Clausen. Disparate Parts is moving from audio multi-tracking to virtual band videos. We’ve had old band members rejoin the group, and found a new lead guitarist, Niko Smith! Sol Singers share songs on Zoom every Monday and also host a drop-in session on Fridays for people to chat and listen to beautiful music. We’ve been able to record some beautiful chamber music videos in the sanctuary, with just 2-3 people at a time in the room: for example, the Handel *Violin Sonata in D*, played by Gabriel Longuinhos and Karl Winkler.

Now that we are hopefully in the home stretch of the pandemic, First U is reaching out to a diverse group of UU-friendly musicians across the country and right here in New Mexico. We have shown videos by Lea Morris (DC area), Melanie DeMore (Oakland), and Jenny Bird (Taos), played music by Issa Noor and Cathryn McGill (ABQ), Crys Matthews (DC), and Randy Granger (Las Cruces), and listened to Yuri Yamamoto’s sensitive Japanese pieces. Coming up, we’ll be featuring new takes on UU hymns by jazz musician Francisco Ruiz, and featuring more works by First U members Dona DuQuin, Sharon Stepler, and Linda Myers. I encourage you to look up these musicians’ websites to learn more about their creative and inspiring work. We are blessed to share music from so many sources.

Socially Responsible Investing

**April 28 at Noon**

Socially responsible investing has come a long way. Some might say it’s finally coming into its own. Join Kris Kennedy, Financial Advisor and First U Member, for a 30-minute Zoom webinar to learn more about socially responsible investing. Sponsored by Radical Generosity. [Click here to register](https://www.radicalgenerosity.org).

This event is purely educational. Securities and advisory services offered through Cetera Advisor Networks LLC, Member FINRA/SIPC, a broker/dealer and a Registered Investment Adviser. Kennedy Financial Network is independent of Cetera.

Board of Directors Update

**2021 is shaping up to be a year to “dream into.”** Between the Strategic Planning Task Force, the ARC Building Task Force looking into what it would take to purchase the ARC Building, and the folks working on what re-opening our campus will look like, there are lots of potential future universes converging over our campus. We’ve got an 8-year-old boy at our house, so this moment reminds me of *Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse*, when multiple versions of Spiderman show up and tell the story of how each came to be a superhero. They’re all different, and they’re all right! Each universe is real and full, and each has the Spiderman it needs! What happens when they all come together? Multiple worlds are saved, of course!

The stakes may not be quite so high in our case, but the future reverberations of our decisions now will be felt for a long time. At our meeting in March, the Board decided to call a congregational meeting to vote on the purchase of the ARC Building and the purchase of the solar panels that we have been renting. Warren Hayslip (our new-to-most-of-us Director of Finance and Operations), our accountant Phillip Robinson, and our Treasurer Faye Rafferty have been working hard to get a clear picture of the financial health of our church. While both purchases offer significant benefits for our congregation now and in the future, both should be weighed carefully against the larger economic conditions of this moment that affect all of our families now and potentially for the next few years as the post-COVID world shakes out. **Look for an announcement of a special congregational meeting in the coming month.**

An image of us all in our little COVID cocoons has been returning to me lately, and I wonder just how beautiful the butterflies will be that emerge at the end of all this. We still have a few more months of confinement and seeming darkness to endure. I hope that your dreams of the world to come are sharp and clear and motivate you to prepare yourself and others for the quick actions that we will need to emerge and take flight. Until then, see you on Zoom!

- Mikaela Renz-Whitmore,
  President of the Congregation
“If you can see your path laid out in front of you step by step, you know it’s not your path. Your own path you make with every step you take. That’s why it’s your path.”

-Joseph Campbell

From Our Director of Religious Education

Greetings!

April’s theme is Becoming, something that often involves letting go of something else. Children do this at warp speeds—leaving clothes, toys, favorite stories, and more behind as they find new sizes, interests, and horizons on their journeys. It can be challenging to keep up! We adults hold tenderly onto the little children that are now reaching our own heights, while they are doing all they can to see over our heads.

This month, in addition to looking inward at our own Becoming, we’ll look beyond ourselves and investigate our relationship to the Earth as we work to become better environmental stewards. Finally, before our 8th graders share their Coming of Age service on the last Sunday of the month, we’ll talk about how to look at the future.

Let’s look to how quickly children grow out of the old and into the new to help us on our journey of letting go of “used to be” and getting ready for “the new normal.”

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

Volunteering

Our typical RE programming depends on many volunteers, and 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. But know that our community is still ‘the curriculum.’

Now, more than ever, we want to show our children how a community shows up for each other. Classes will be shorter and simpler, and I still need you. Please connect with me at dre@uuabq.org if you think you can help!

Zoom Meetings

Links to our meetings can be found on our Facebook page, in the Broadsheet, and on the RE Calendar on our website.

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.

Can’t make your RE meeting?

Children, youth and families can access RE learning anytime! Bitmoji Resource Rooms are available for Elementary and Youth. You can access them on our Facebook pages and on the church website. Click “Learn” from the banner on the front page of the website, then choose a room and start clicking!

Youth News

This month we’ll explore the theme of Becoming—the journey with many different routes. We will talk about four of those routes, the ways our becoming unfolds: Letting Go and Letting In, Finding Your True Self, Becoming People of the Earth, and Making Hopeful Predictions. And yet, as we talk about the ways in which our becoming unfolds, it is important to also remember that, historically, we UUs have been “leavers”—people who struggled not just to find ourselves, but to untangle ourselves from the religious identities we were given. It’s not just unfolding our true selves but untangling from our old selves.

We’ll make room for each other’s stories and pain with tenderness and kindness this month, and beyond. Join me for All Youth Check-Ins on Sundays at 12:15 pm. On Sunday, April 25, we will attend the Coming of Age service together in support of the youth who are making that journey. Email me with questions, or information on how to get involved!

Alana Rodriguez, youth@uuabq.org
Youth Programs Coordinator, RE Assistant
Join us every Sunday morning at 9:30 for weekly discussions on a variety of social justice, UU history, and faith-based and spiritual topics. Bring your coffee or tea and be a part of this virtual group.

**Meeting ID:** 842 4289 2753  
**Passcode:** 041625

**April 4**  
**Easter Sunday. The Journey of Becoming.**  
When was the day you first welcomed in the person you would become? What is this process of becoming, and what are the milestones you name on your journey?  
Angela Merkert, facilitator

**April 11**  
**To Dare Greatly and Become Real.**  
Writings of Brene Brown and others on the Journey of Becoming. How does one become real? Your memoir in 6 words.  
Angela Merkert, facilitator

**April 18**  
**Daring Stewards of the Planet.**  
What daring actions may take us outside our comfort zone and lessen our “footprint” on our Earth? In honor of Earth Day.  
Angela Merkert, facilitator

**April 25**  
**“Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time” Part 2.** This book by Marcus Borg, a Jesus scholar and college professor, presents an understanding of Jesus that challenges traditional Christian beliefs, and is more compatible with UU views. He writes: “The image of Jesus I have presented is quite different from the popular image, the Jesus we have met before.” Unnecessary to have attended Part 1.  
Ron Friederich, facilitator

**Green Corner With Earth Web**  
**“Why I Joined the Earth Web Team” by Dale Potter**  
Humanity is facing an unprecedented disaster: the climate crisis. The world is in a sixth mass extinction event with an annihilation of biodiversity that is caused by humans and is accelerating. The impacts of an acidic rising sea, heat waves, desertification, and flooding are responsible for increasing migration, hunger, conflict, and death. Given the Unitarian Universalist guiding principles, this crisis is an imperative that we must address. Margret Mead’s statement “Never doubt that a small group of committed, thoughtful people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”—backed up by social research demonstrating that it takes only 3.5% of the population to bring about meaningful change—gives hope. However, time is quickly running out. Only an approach that changes the systems that have fostered not only the environmental crisis, but the social, human rights, and equity crises facing humanity worldwide, will succeed. It will require rapid mobilization and a campaign of sustained pressure using non-violent methods to save the biosphere and humanity.

**Monthly Green Tip:** Look into Solar Electric Systems! State and Federal Tax breaks are available, interest rates have never been lower, and it will increase the value of your home. Be sure to get 3 bids.

**CUUPS This Month**  
Coyote Willow Covenant of UU Pagans holds its meet-and-greet/business meeting/planning session virtually on the 2nd Friday of each month at 7:00 pm. At this month’s meeting on **April 9**, we will be having a Ritual Round Table. We want to hear your thoughts on what makes a great Ritual. What makes it meaningful? What makes it memorable? Please have a candle and lighter ready for the start of the meeting. Email Victoria Rosquist at bboydmbabe@gmail.com for login information.
Join Us for Landscape Day
April 3, 9:00 am - Noon
Spring is on the way, and our church campus is calling us to come out to rake a few leaves and spruce up the beds! While we had to postpone landscape cleanups during 2020, now with restrictions lifting and vaccines becoming available, we are scheduling a work-morning to tend the church grounds.

Everyone participating will be asked to wear a mask and maintain distance as required to reduce the possibility of transmitting the virus. We will also not be serving food for this event as part of the protocol. Hopefully our devoted volunteers will be so ready to come out and help prepare the church grounds for spring that these measures will not discourage you from joining us.

If an opportunity to get together and engage in physical work with old acquaintances has never sounded more welcome, please join us the first Saturday in April. Trash bags will be provided, but please bring your own tools and refreshments. Please let Steve Phillips know you will be attending at nmsleep@unm.edu.

UU People of Color Group
We welcome all self-identified people of color in our congregation to join us in creating and holding a safe, confidential, and brave place for self-reflection and for the sharing of our individual experiences, to be held in community and compassion.
For more information, please contact Carmen Samora at carmenmsamora@gmail.com.

Brothers Men’s Group
Men of all ages in our community are welcome to join for conversation and support on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm. Join us on April 13 and 27 at https://uuma.zoom.us/j/736923181.

Coming to the Table
Coming to the Table (CTTT), a conversation for understanding toward dismantling racism, meets on Zoom on the third Monday of each month at 6:00 pm. To join the April 19 meeting, email RacialJustice@OurBestTeam.com with “CTTT-ABQ” in the subject line for the Zoom Meeting information. Learn more at www.ComingToTheTable.org.

Wisdom Circle: Finding Friends, Building Community
Saturday, April 17, 10:30 am - Noon
As the daffodils and tulips raise their lovely heads, we blooming boomers will gather round our virtual table again, this time to talk about the topic that came out first in last month’s survey—finding friends and building community. As human beings, we all need meaningful friendships and a sense of belonging. Please come prepared to share your experiences, insights, and suggestions on connecting with others in authentic ways that feed your soul. Beyond that, we’ll consider how best to foster and sustain the circles of shared commitment and interdependence that underpin genuine community. All welcome to join the conversation. If so inclined, bring along a drink of choice and something sustaining to nibble on. Contact Jerilyn Bowen at jbowen1@unm.edu.
Meeting ID: 962 2094 2211
Password: 485006

Bread, Wine, and Book Club will meet Friday, April 9 at 7:00 pm on Zoom. This month we will each share one or two books we’ve enjoyed reading. Contact Martha Beyerlein at martha.beyerlein@comcast.net for the meeting information.

The Monday Afternoon Book Club will meet Monday, April 19 at 1:30 pm on Zoom. The book is The Weight of Ink by Rachel Kadish. Please contact Joyce Etheridge at 509-308-5523 for further information.

Reading on Racism Book Group’s selection for April is Ceremony by New Mexican Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko. Our meeting is April 28, 3:00-5:00 pm. To join us and receive the Zoom link, please contact Kent Madden at revelmadden22@gmail.com.
There’s More!
Our campus is still closed, but we are not! There are many opportunities to connect and get involved virtually.
Go to http://uuabq.com/virtual-connections/ to find out more, or email our Director of Membership & Communications, Laira Magnusson, at LMags@uuabq.org.