



The Messenger

FIRST UNITARIAN

Albuquerque ✧ East Mountains ✧ Socorro

November 2020

November's Theological Theme Is Healing.



This past January, I had the incredible opportunity to spend a week in El Salvador with a group of clergy from the United States. The trip was organized by the UU College of Social Justice, and we were hosted by a human rights group based in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador.

The November theme for First U is healing, and I learned a lot about healing during that trip. El Salvador went through a brutal civil war in the '80s. During that war, the U.S. funded the Salvadorian government, which was intent on resisting calls for equity and democracy. The war finally ended in the early '90s with a negotiated truce.

The war ended, but the country is still in shambles. It's one of the world's most violent countries, poverty is rampant, and human rights are routinely ignored. The war ended but the country hasn't healed.

Why is that? When the war ended, there were a couple attempts to have an honest reckoning about the conflict. War crimes were committed by both sides, with the government perpetrating the vast majority via paramilitary death squads and regular massacres. As the negotiations for a process of truth and reconciliation moved forward, leaders on both sides decided that it was politically expedient to avoid naming names and holding specific people accountable. Three years after the war ended, a general amnesty was granted and the military leaders who gave orders to murder entire villages were let off the hook. Even the facts about these

massacres were denied and suppressed. The full truth was not acknowledged. The process of truth and reconciliation stopped there and, truly, the process of healing stopped there as well.

Living in a country where the truth cannot be spoken and living in a country where no one is held accountable creates a culture of distrust and cynicism. The fruit of that condition is a country held hostage by gangs and a government that can't be trusted. This corrosive atmosphere trickles down as despair and fatalism in the general population. The result is El Salvador as it is today.

Whether in a country or in ourselves, healing starts with all parties acknowledging the truth. Victims must know that their stories are heard. Perpetrators must own their part in the harm. And real amends must be made. Healing isn't a passive act of turning inward. Because we are human, we all have times when we are victims and times when we are perpetrators. Hopefully the wrongs are minor and can be repaired. But regardless of the severity of the misdeed, we need to be clear about the active process and our role in it.

As much as I love our litany of atonement by Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs, it's not sufficient to say "I forgive myself, I forgive others, and I vow to begin again in love." The healing process must be mutual and must include an honest statement of the facts and then real accountability. This is a hard thing, but done with integrity, it helps us—victim and perpetrator alike—to return to wholeness. May it be so.

Rev. Bob

Post-Election Vespers Service

Wednesday, November 5, 7:00 pm

You are invited to join us for a special Vespers on the day after the 2020 election.

If the events of the week have you feeling, well, *feelings*, join the ministers for a special, post-election Vespers service. Vespers are short services for spiritual centering in music, prayer, readings, and community.

See the Worship page for detail on more special services this month: the **Blessing of the Animals** on **November 1**, our **Annual Memorial Wall Ceremony** on **November 15**—as a drop-in in the Memorial Garden—and the **Interfaith Thanksgiving Service** on **November 22**.

If you need help with Zoom in order to participate in any church service, please email our church administrator, Jess Bess, at admin@uuabq.org. She can find help for you.

Join Us on Zoom

Worship services and other meetings continue on Zoom. 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.

Meeting ID: 168 223 701

November 1

"Healing the Planet, Healing Ourselves"

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

We humans are tied to the land and the water and the air. It's a vibrant system in which both the planet and the human race either thrive or decline together. In this season of drought in New Mexico, how do we bring healing to our environment and ourselves?

November 8

"What Now?"

The Rev. Angela Herrera

The votes are in. What now? What do we make of this moment? How shall we proceed in light of all that has happened and is happening?

November 15

"Healing Powers"

The Rev. Angela Herrera

A sermon about the human capacity for healing, even when we aren't sure how to do it.

This service will include our annual candle-lighting to lift up loved ones who have passed. To have your photos included in the service, send them to Chris at cpaul@uuabq.org by Nov. 12.

November 22

"The Promise and the Practice (BIPOC Voices)"

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

The Promise and the Practice is a celebration of our shared commitment to live into a new chapter in the story of our faith. This worship centers the voices and stories of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color UUs, calling upon the lived experience of BIPOC religious professionals as sacred text. It's a turning moment; a choice to listen deeply to the stories in our movement that have not been heard—or taken to heart—by all UUs.

November 29

"A Theology of Forgiveness"

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

Unitarian Universalism has many strengths: deep inclusiveness, an explicit call to work for justice, and the encouragement of personal pursuit of meaning and purpose. However, our faith does not have a well-articulated theology of forgiveness and redemption. How can we do better, and develop resilience and connection within ourselves and our communities?

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 for anyone who'd like to participate.

Meeting ID: 593 831 292

Special Services

November 1, 2:00 pm

Blessing of the Animals

See page 7 (Groups & Activities) for details.

November 15, 3-5pm

Annual Memorial Wall Ceremony

Each November, we hold a ceremony to remember UUs whose names are on our congregation's Memorial Wall. In this pandemic year, the ceremony is adapted to avoid crowding in our beautiful—but cozy—Memorial Garden. Drop by anytime between 3 and 5 pm to join Angela Herrera in placing flowers and candles on the wall in honor of as many names as you'd like. We will provide candles and some flowers; you are invited to bring flowers as well. Masks are required, of course, and social distancing is encouraged.

November 22, 1:30 pm

Interfaith Thanksgiving

Every year, First Unitarian joins with other local congregations for an interfaith Thanksgiving service. This year, join us online as we give thanks as one diverse community in a spirit of neighborly love.

Watch the eBroadsheet for Zoom meeting ID.

Community News

We're With You for the Holidays

The holly-jolly holidays are not joyful for all of us—or joyful all the time for most of us. The Caring Network is here for you as the winter holidays approach. Mark your calendar for a special Blue December Vespers service on Wednesday, December 9 at 7:00 pm. We'll share music, poetry, and a Litany of Comfort to acknowledge and salve the melancholy side of this time. And remember that shorter Vespers services are available every Wednesday for a calming midweek respite. Check the Worship page for details on accessing Vespers services.

Missing First U's Thanksgiving Dinner and looking to share a little of the day with your church community? We're hosting a Zoom dessert hour on Thanksgiving evening. Keep an eye on the Broadsheet for details.

Do you know a member of this congregation who could use some holiday cheer? Share their name with Rev. Bob at blavallee@uuabq.org and we'll see that they are contacted.

For those mourning a loss at this difficult time, the Grief Group scheduled to begin in October has been postponed until after the winter holidays. Contact us at caring@uuabq.org for more information, to sign up, or to talk to a member of the Care Team.

We Light a Candle

We grieve with the friends of church member Patricia Dwyer, who died in early October.

We mourn long-time member Sally Jacobsen, who died this month after a long illness, and hold her daughter Claire Jacobsen in our hearts.

We light a candle for Lisa Goldman, who is recovering from back surgery and grieving the loss of her sister.

We send healing thoughts to Michele Smith, who is recovering from surgery.

We hold Judy Goering in our hearts as she recovers from surgery.



Our thoughts are with the residents of Brookdale Senior Living, who were placed in lockdown.

Much love to Skip Bleistein, recovering from surgery.

Our thoughts are with Sherril Spencer as she recovers from a fall.

We celebrate with Alisa Cooper de Uribe, who was named NM Teacher of the year! Congratulations!

We all need help from time to time. If you're experiencing difficulties, health issues, or transitions, you can reach out to the Caring Network of First Unitarian at caring@uuabq.org.

Board of Directors Update

So how's that decision on your pledge coming along? Are you sensing a theme for my Messenger articles during the pledge drive?

We're approaching the halfway mark in pledges, so that's encouraging! Thanks to those who already have pledged, and to the Radical Generosity team for all your hard work. I hope you know I wouldn't ask if it weren't important. Our pledges pay for the salaries of our ministers and staff; they pay to keep the heat on and for the upkeep of our buildings; they fund RE and other programming; this year, they keep us Zooming.

The board had the pleasure of hearing from Andrew Fearnside of the Leadership Succession Committee this month. The LSC chooses the nominees for the board and other key congregational committees. Our church is in desperate need of people to serve on the Financial Review (congregational) and Finance (board) committees. There are openings for other volunteer positions as well. So if you've ever had an inkling of volunteering in this way, now is the time to raise your hand. Please contact Andrew or me if you are able to volunteer in these important roles.

I had the joy of beginning the Beloved Conversations diversity training this week and am anticipating the large-group meeting at noon today. I met with my learning pod, a group of five women from around the West who I will be sharing this journey with over the next few months. While they seemed kind, it made me yearn to be sharing this learning with my own church members, as we did for Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility*. I know that that's coming. Thanks to Bob LaVallee for getting Beloved Conversations going in our church.

You can reach me at boardpres@uuabq.org with suggestions or comments. Stay warm and cozy—I hear winter is coming!

Heather Clark, President of the Congregation

The LSC Wants You

There's still time for new and diverse leaders to step into volunteer leadership at First Unitarian! Forge lasting connections with fellow UUs, and make a difference in our church and community. Contact Leadership Succession Committee chair Andrew Fearnside at atfearnside@gmail.com to learn more about how you can get involved.



Religious Education

From Our Director of Religious Education



"You can hold yourself back from the sufferings of the world, that is something you are free to do and it accords with your nature, but perhaps this very holding back is the one suffering you could avoid.

- Franz Kafka

Greetings!

It's kind of weird to be writing about healing when we are amid such upheaval on all fronts—pandemic, racial harm, political instability, environmental chaos, and more. It's downright peculiar to try to write about healing a couple of weeks before our elections take place. The conclusion I've come to is that whatever happens—insert all possible scenarios here—healing will be required.

Our immediate impulse is to shrink away from pain, anxiety, or grief, but retreating allows those wounds to cut us off from our world and ourselves. When you are ready, leaning into that pain—taking it on, learning from it, and then acting on what you've learned—is the road to healing. Acting on it, whether that's something as personal as forgiving yourself, or as big as running for office, connects you to others and results in healing.

I'm looking forward to talking to our children about healing this month!

Our POP! (Parents of Preschoolers) program has started, but you can still join us! We had a great discussion at our first session. We'll meet again on November 13th at 6:00 pm to talk about *Living with Preschoolers*. If you are the parent of a child between 2 and 5 years old, let me know if you'd like to join us! Contact me at dre@uuabq.org. The materials are short and easy to access, and we'd love to have a few more people in our group!

I hope you had a chance to check out the September Bitmoji Resource Room. The Elementary Room changes every month, and you can find it on our First UU Families Facebook page or the church's website. I created this fun Bitmoji Classroom for our elementary children to be able to interact with the RE stories, songs, videos, and activities for the month, whenever they want. Click "Learn" from the banner on our website, then

"Elementary RE Resource Room," and start clicking! Here's a link: <http://uuabq.com/religious-education/elementary-re-resource-room/>

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

Youth News

November is often the time of year when we think about gratitude and thankfulness. It's also important to remember that this time of year can be difficult, and that's especially true this year. So this month we're going to talk about HEALING. In particular our focuses will be to not run away from the hard work of healing, to listen before you try to help and heal others, to heal by telling the truth, and to find ways to comfort yourself. Remember, although things might feel raw right now, you have the courage to face these times and can practice the skills needed for healing history, healing with gratitude, and healing with service to others. Remember to check out the Bitmoji Resource Room weekly for new content on the theme, and join us for fun during our weekly check-ins on Sunday.



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

Zoom Meetings for Children, Youth, and Adults & Caregivers

If you're not getting the notices for our online check-ins, make sure your family is registered! **All current 2019-20 registrations will continue into the new year. Please 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!** Here's a link to our electronic RE registration: <http://uuabq.com/registering-for-re/>, open all year.

Volunteering

Families are stretched to the limit these days. That's a big reason to change how we do things. 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!

Adult Faith Formation

Sunday Explorations

Refill your cups of coffee or tea and join us in stimulating discussions every Sunday at 9:30 am on Zoom. The November theme is Healing. Be sure to set your clocks back one hour on November 1!

Meeting ID: 842 4289 2753

Password: 041625

Nov 1: Pre-Election Hopes and Concerns.

Living out our democratic principles. Being informed without being overwhelmed. Practices in being present.

Angela Merkert, facilitator

Nov 8: Where Are We Now? Election

Outcomes. Reflections on the past week. How can we be supportive now?

Angela Merkert, facilitator

Nov 15: Healing Interpersonal and Social

Fractures. Creating stronger connections through engaging disappointments and pain, and building bridges out of compassion.

Angela Merkert, facilitator

Nov 22: Being Grateful in Spite of... Part

3. The final chapters in our book, *Attitudes of Gratitude* by M.J. Ryan, present more insightful ways we can build a more grateful and enriched life. Unnecessary to have attended Parts 1 and 2.

Ron Friederich, facilitator

Nov 29: Thanksgiving Rituals—Adaptations in a COVID-19 Time.

Memories of Thanksgivings past and new ways of commemorating the holiday this year. The significance of rituals to us.

Angela Merkert, facilitator

Music Notes from Susan Peck 🎵



Our music program has settled into the virtual world. As much as we would love to sing and play music together, we know it is not yet safe to do so. In the meantime, Chalice Choir singers are getting better and better at recording virtual choir tracks. Sol Singers are launching a Zoom

visit program, complete with songs (pre-recorded). If you're feeling lonely and would like a visit from a few Sol Singers with some music, please contact Jetta Reynolds or Susan Peck. Disparate Parts have also been actively recording; you heard numbers from our Quarantine Sessions in the Sunday prelude, joys & concerns, and postlude all through October. Our monthly open mic, Fourth Sundays at Four, has developed into a lovely community where artists and audience come together to support creativity in music and words. Musicians from First U will be joining forces with several other local congregations to create music for our annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, which will be held virtually on Sunday, Nov. 22.

Contact Susan at speck@uuabq.org with your questions or for more information about how we're continuing to make music at First U.

Family Promise Update

Family Promise ABQ continues to serve families experiencing homelessness. We at First Unitarian continue to support this important work! Our upcoming host week, November 1—8, will be supported primarily by our Foodie Team. These volunteers will provide dinners and shop for breakfast and lunch food.

Family Promise ABQ continues to house the families at Church of the Good Shepherd, and will do so until they move into their new, PERMANENT quarters. They have put a bid on a large building near Comanche and San Pedro, with the goal to move in January. Permanent housing will change our role. We have yet to determine what that will look like—and of course, with Covid, it will be ever-changing.

Family Promise ABQ will be fundraising for the renovations on the new building. Plus, we might get the opportunity to do some sweat equity such as painting, etc. More to come! We are always grateful for your continued support of this important and exciting Social Justice project!

-Blessings, Paula Fisher

Groups & Activities *all are welcome*

Wisdom Circle

When we elders come back together post-election on **Sat. Nov. 21st from 10:30am to noon**, **Rev. Bob LaVallee** will join us to orchestrate a chautauqua on the UU theme of the month, Healing.

His description of the program: “As I write these words on October 14, I have no idea what November 21 will be (like everyone else). What I do know is that, regardless of the outcome on November 4, we will all need healing from a four-year trauma. Drawing on my experience as a chaplain, I’ll talk about the principles of trauma-informed care and how we might use them with ourselves and each other.”

This is a wonderful, timely opportunity to mend what needs mending within under Rev. Bob’s caring pastoral guidance. All are welcome to join the circle.

Feel free to bring along a cuppa something to sip on, a smidge of something to nibble on, and a whole boatload of experience to draw on.

For info on joining the meeting, contact Jerilyn Bowen, jbowen1@unm.edu.



Among the offerings at this year’s Connections Week was a new one called **Meet & Greet**. We held our first event in October, and it was a great success! Meet & Greet can best be described as 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 and nibbles if they like. We start with some “icebreaker” questions and go with the flow from there.

Meetings are on the **1st Saturday of the month** from **7:00-8:30 pm**.

We hope you’ll try this new opportunity to just kick back and socialize—with old friends and new!

If you are interested or have questions, contact Linda Skye: lskye@unm.edu or 505-401-5989.

Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, Nov. 1 2:00 PM

This virtual service, held on Zoom, will be a unique opportunity for all of our beloved companions to receive a blessing from Rev. Angela—even the ones who can’t join us at church because they don’t travel well.

We will also honor our companions who have gone on to their Next Great Adventure. If you would like them included in the memorial slideshow, please email a picture, along with their name and yours as you would like them displayed, to Raven Reed Starr at ravenreed@gmail.com no later than **Friday, Oct. 16th**. If you don’t have a picture of your beloved companion, feel free to email just their name and species along with your name.

Even those animals who aren’t included in the slideshow will be recognized. Please have a candle and source of flame ready if you want to honor one of your dear friends. Feel free to contact ravenreed@gmail.com with any questions.

Meeting ID: 915 1306 2668

November Reads

Bread, Wine, and Book Club will meet **Friday, November 13 at 7:00 pm** on Zoom. We will be discussing *The Old Gringo* by Carlos Fuentes. Contact Martha Beyerlein (martha.beyerlein@comcast.net) for the meeting information.

The **Monday Afternoon Book Club** will meet **Monday, November 16** on Zoom. The book is *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood. 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 *The Evolution of God* by Robert Wright. For meeting information, contact Bob Wood at 352-0212 or roberttwood@gmail.com.

Reading on Racism Book Group will read and discuss *The Yellow House* by Sara Broom at our **Wednesday, Nov. 25** Zoom meeting. Book is available in paperback, audio, and Kindle. Contact Becky Steele at dsteele2@gmail.com for info, and for the link to order the book from Bookworks.



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– DATED MATERIAL –

What's the Latest?

Have you moved, changed your name, disconnected your landline, or switched email addresses? Let us know! Email our Church Administrator, Jess Bess, at admin@uuabq.org with the new information. Keeping in touch is more important than ever!

Still Reading?

If you would like to stop receiving the mailed Messenger or switch to our emailed version, email publications@uuabq.org and let us know.