



The Messenger

FIRST UNITARIAN

Albuquerque • East Mountains • Socorro

March 2021

March's Theological Theme Is Commitment.



I'm a gardener. It's a spiritual practice for me. Some of you will think "And?" and some of you already know everything I'm going to say next. Spiritual practice demands commitment, and so does gardening.

Gardens—and gardeners—as a metaphor work well for so many things. The garden can be a bed of flowers or vegetables, and it can also be you, your family, your community ... even a whole country, or the whole planet.

A gardener is committed the moment they plant a seed in the ground. Planting a garden leads logically to harvesting later. Though gardening is fraught with challenges, there is always the promise of a perfect tomato or rose in return.

Gardening is an adventure. There is the unpredictability of the weather. Will it ever rain? Will the wind knock down my seedlings? Will there be a late frost? Am I attracting pollinators? Surviving all that, squash bugs proliferate, and I resolve to give up.

I return! I resolve again: to buy squash at the farmer's market because squash bugs are heartbreaking, squash is cheap, and I can deal with the challenges of tomatoes. Maybe I'll return to growing squash later, in a new location. Maybe some things I used to grow easily will never do well in my new location. Learn.

This year I found an online community of local gardeners. The only thing we all have in common is that we live in this unique place. We share our triumphs and our failures, and I have learned so much. There are a couple of experts, some newbies, and the bulk of us continuing to learn and grow things in a challenging environment. We consult the experts and each other and are boosted by the chance to help the newbies along.

What does my commitment mean? It's personal—there is some pride, and also learning to negotiate challenges and my own limitations. And it's communal—there is joy in listening to and learning from the community, and in sharing our knowledge and experience to help each other keep growing.

Mia Noren
Director of Religious Education, Credentialed

Reminder: Angela Is on Sabbatical

Our Senior Minister, Angela Herrera, is on sabbatical from **February 1—May 31**. During that time, Associate Minister Bob LaVallee is the minister in charge. Contact Bob at blavallee@uuabq.org.

For the December Messenger article about Angela's sabbatical, [click here](#). You can also [watch Angela's sermon from January 3](#) and the [worship service on January 31](#).

Worship Calendar for March

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](#).

March 7

Guest Minister, *The Rev. Joel Miller*

Rev. Joel is the Interim Minister at All Souls Indianapolis. A graduate of Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, CA, his ministry includes opening and serving the Columbine UU church in the Denver area for 7 years, serving as senior minister in Buffalo, NY for 11 years, and serving as interim minister for 5 different UU congregations since 2011. He is primarily a Humanist, but has been surprised to find himself a theist because of his spiritual practices in recovery from alcohol addiction.

March 14

At the Precipice: Climate & Faith

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

Inspired by Laura Paskus' recent book *At the Precipice*, Rev. Bob will discuss how faith can drive our response to a changing climate in the world and at home here in New Mexico.

March 21

Guest Minister, *Dr. Elias Ortega*

Dr. Elias Ortega is the President of Meadville Lombard Theological School. He is an interdisciplinary scholar who received his M.Div. and Ph.D. (Religion and Society, Magna Cum Laude) from Princeton Theological Seminary. In addition to leading Meadville Lombard, he currently serves the larger Unitarian Universalist movement as a member of the UUA's Commission on Institutional Change.

March 28

Beloved Conversations: Justice, Discomfort, and Joy

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

Participants in the Fall session of the Beloved Conversations program share their learnings and lessons. Rev. Bob LaVallee leads the discussion.

Seeking Children's Affirmation Videos

We are looking for some new videos of community members reciting the Children's Affirmation for Sunday Worship on Zoom. Families, kids, youth, adults (or pets!) are encouraged to get creative and send them in. [Contact Rev. Bob](#) for guidelines on how to submit your creation.



We Light a Candle

We grieve the death of longtime member Mary Hurst. We hold her husband Donald and her family and friends in our hearts.

We grieve with the family and friends of church member Alan Porter, who has died after a long illness. We hold his wife Gail Feigenbaum in our love.

We hold Sarah Peterson in our hearts as she grieves the recent deaths of her two brothers.

We hold Bethe Orrell in our hearts as she grieves the death of her mother-in-law, Dorothy.

We grieve with Patrick Rodriguez & Andrew Rodriguez, whose mother Rachel has died. We hold the entire Rodriguez family in our love.

We send our healing thoughts to Pat Diem and to Kathleen Rhoad as they each recover from surgery.

We light a candle for Casey Spivey's sister, Susan, who was hospitalized with Covid and is now recovering at home.

We hold Geri Knoebel in our care as she has surgery on March 8. We send our prayers for a quick recovery.

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

Community News

Membership Milestones

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

Arabella Flores

Annette, Jay & Tristan Forrest

Elly Van Mil

Happy Membership Anniversary to the following members of our community:

One Year

Chuck & Louann Blocher

Holly Reina

Jordan Jones

KoDo

Brian Slosman

Five Years

Andy Apple

Vivian Cannon

Austin Silva & Amanda Wachtel

Ten Years

Callie Cone

Damaris Donado & Dimitri Kapelianis

Tom Dorr

Katie Crawford

Fifteen Years

Carol Cowan

Twenty Years

Dave & Mary Colton

Cynthia Applegate & David Robertson

Twenty-five Years

Lisa Spriggs

Thirty Years

Ron Randall

Thirty-five Years

Anne McGoey

Sixty-two Years!

Ina Miller

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

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 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).

Change for the Future 2021!

During the Annual Meeting on January 31, our church members voted for this year’s Change for the Future recipients. This program gives designated funds from the weekly offering to a different nonprofit each quarter. The votes are in, and our recipients are:

- **ACLU of NM** protects and advances justice, liberty, and equity as guaranteed by the constitutions of New Mexico and the United States, especially focused on groups that have been historically disenfranchised.
- **Brain Injury Alliance of New Mexico** will use funds to pay for an Outreach Program Coordinator to respond to requests for assistance, organize volunteers, improve services and support, and stock and distribute brain injury survival toolkits.
- **La Plaza de Encuentro** is improving digital integration and literacy during Covid-19 to include essential computer technology skills, access to technologies, and support services to strengthen our Latinx immigrant community.
- **Read to Me Network** will use funds to address the need for greater diversity in children’s books by buying quality books to donate to children to fill the gap left in donations due to the pandemic.

Recipients for each quarter are announced during each service when we take our offering. You can donate on our Giving Page at

<http://uuabq.com/pledging-and-contributions/giving-page/>

and designate the “Change for the Future” program.

Community News

All-Member Virtual Art Show

The Arts & Aesthetics Committee is proud to announce they are now accepting submissions for an **All-Member Virtual Art Show to start mid-March**. Images of submitted art pieces will be displayed on our website for viewing and purchase by the public. Thirty percent of artists' sales will be donated to First U.

[To submit, please fill out the online form by March 7](#). For help with sizing and submitting photos of your work, contact Graham Bowkett at graham.bowkett@gmail.com. For other questions about the show, contact Sally New at sallyprn100@icloud.com.

Addiction Recovery Ministry

“Two Commitments That Help Early Recovery,” inspired by the Addiction Ministry Handbook:

Attend to good nutrition: Two points are important here – achieving nutritional balance and establishing a regular schedule for meals. Not only is the commitment of adhering to a meal schedule valuable, but the emptiness stimulated by missed meals can cause mood swings that may be a trigger for addictive behaviors. Good nutrition also means moderation with caffeine and sugar, because their physiological effects can mimic the rush and withdrawal associated with addictions.

Pursue honesty: Beyond the concepts of right and wrong, dishonesty is bad for our mental health. Telling lies makes us then live in fear of being caught. Addicted people or those of us in active addiction may feel compelled to tell lies to maintain our addictive lifestyle. The guilt, shame, and anxiety that builds with each new lie (especially the lies we tell ourselves) is a further temptation to use our addictive behavior or substance to feel better.

While perhaps difficult at first, both good nutrition and the pursuit of honesty can help us reach that next step of sobriety and recovery. **If you or someone you love is struggling with addiction, please join us right after the service on Sunday, March 7 on Zoom.**

Meeting ID: 961 4648 2750. Password: 425559

Board of Directors Update



I am not a gardener. But in these first few warm days of spring, the metaphor is irresistible; forgive me. The Board is hard at work preparing the ground for what we hope will be the start of new life—post-pandemic life—at our church.

The Board has provided questions for the task force looking into the **possible purchase of the ARC Building** that currently sits in the middle of our campus. Generous donors have already indicated that they would be willing to cover a significant portion of the cost, and the Task Force is looking into whether the purchase would make sense for our congregation in terms of our current needs and finances. If the Board recommends purchasing the building, we will hold a special congregational meeting to vote on whether to take on a mortgage, if one will be needed.

Board members have stepped up to serve on the Church's standing committees. The Finance Committee will be looking into our overall financial health. New board member Carla Williams will serve on two groups—the COVID-19 Council and a still-to-be-formed Reopening Task Force—that will work together to decide when it is safe for the church campus to reopen, and how to do it safely for different groups. We are all missing worship together, but **our values lead us to follow the science, minimize risk for the most vulnerable among us, and do all we can to come together as safely as we can.** Until then, I hope you find nourishment at Wednesday Vespers, our Sunday Worship services, or in the myriad groups who are still meeting in cyberspace.

- *Mikaela Renz-Whitmore,*
President of the Congregation

Religious Education



From Our Director of Religious Education

“Never doubt that a small group of committed, thoughtful people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
Margaret Mead



Greetings!

March’s theme is Commitment. Unitarian Universalist religious education for children and youth is based on a commitment to asking questions and being curious. Curiosity can lead you down the wrong path sometimes (ask the cat!), but it also teaches you to recognize when you are at a dead end, put that path behind you, and go on. To change. To be able to say, “I don’t know.” A commitment to curiosity and questioning requires one to also be open to new ideas, experiences, people, and feelings. Most parents encourage this in their children. I think this commitment to change is unique in religious instruction.

Over the last few weeks, our children have been learning about the [proposed new 8th Principle](#). We call our faith a “living tradition.” We subscribe to [six Sources of that living tradition](#), instead of adhering to the teachings of one holy book or one prophet. And when we learn new things, we expect our faith to change. We vote on adding new Sources and Principles, as well as changing them. We are committed to keeping an open mind to anything that might challenge and change us and our faith.

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

RE Notes

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:

[Elementary Resource Room](#)

[Youth Resource Room](#)

Or, click “Learn” from the main menu on the homepage, choose a room, and start clicking!

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.

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!

Youth News



One year. That’s how long it’s been since we were together in the La Amikoj Room. Some of the last things we did together were Teen Night at Explora and providing treats in the newly renovated Social Hall as a fundraiser for our group. All those Girl Scout Cookies ... yum! I sure miss those days and being with

all the wonderful youth in our church. Commitment is something we know a lot about. Remote learning, following the health order, not being with people we love—all things that require commitment.

Commitment can look a lot like climbing a mountain. The path is long and full of challenges, but we know there is a beautiful view waiting for us at the top. Just as often, though, it’s like trudging through a thick forest, with dead ends and streams with slithering snakes. The trails are too steep and appear abandoned and unsafe, and when there’s a fork, you have to choose which path to take, committing to the “what-ifs.”

So, in First YoUth this month, we’re going to travel the path of COMMITMENT together. On this path we’ll look for guideposts, otherwise known as the “Four C’s.” These are curiosity, change, conscience, and compassion. Explore the Youth Bitmoji Resource Room every week for more information on each of these “C’s” and join in All Youth Check-Ins for discussion and fun!

**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

March 7

To Be a People of Commitment. The Life Paths made through our commitments. How do we discern commitments and assume responsibilities? What are the influences that determine these commitments? How do the ancient texts address the significance of making commitments?

Angela Merkert, facilitator

March 14

Faith and Commitment/Covenant: How Shall We Live? When we commit to values and principles of faith we also make commitments. How do those commitments support our choices in how we shall live our lives? We will include commitments to living our Seven UU Principles as a part of this discussion.

Angela Merkert, facilitator

March 21

To Be an Ally; To Be in Solidarity. There is a difference in the commitments made as we choose to be an ally or in solidarity with causes. How do our actions differ as we identify ourselves and our commitments?

Angela Merkert, facilitator

March 28

“Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time”

Part 1 using a book by the late Marcus Borg, a Jesus scholar and college philosophy professor. Many of us have left the Christian churches of our past, but Borg invites us to look with fresh eyes at the “pre-Easter Jesus.” He writes that this Jesus has been distorted by later church doctrines/creeds. Consider this: What wisdom can we draw from the life and teachings of Jesus?

Ron Friederich, facilitator

Music Notes with Susan Peck



Our **worship in March** will feature classical music performances by Gabriel Longuinhos, Karl Winkler, and others, along with new pieces recorded by Disparate Parts, our contemporary band.

Watch for our **monthly Zoom Open Mic**, 4th Sunday at 4:00. We have a lovely group of musicians and writers sharing their work with an appreciative audience.

Members of **Chalice Choir and Sol Singers** are launching sessions to learn how to sing together using Jamulus, open-source software that helps musicians defeat time lag when playing and singing together on the internet.

Great Family Promise News!

First Unitarian helped Family Promise of Albuquerque **successfully support over 80 families experiencing homelessness in 2020.** We continue to provide support for our host weeks and are now helping with laundry once a month.

Family Promise has successfully closed escrow on a building on San Pedro and will soon begin renovations so that it can operate as a shelter for families. We will keep you updated on how we, as a congregation, can continue to support Family Promise ABQ. If you would like to become involved, please contact Paula Fisher at fastfins@comcast.net.

Are You New to First U?

Maybe you've joined the church recently, are planning to join, or are just starting to check us out during our online services. 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! Drop in and get to know other newbies—no need to sign up or make a long commitment. We meet once a month on the **first Tuesday at 7:00 pm, with our next meeting March 2.**

Meeting ID: 823 9345 8787 /Passcode: 681977

Groups & Activities

CUUPS This Month

Join the Coyote Willow Covenant of UU Pagans for an **Ostara ritual on Saturday, March 20 at 7:00 pm**. Everyone is encouraged to ponder beforehand what you have gained and are leaving behind, and what you look forward to. You can share or write in a journal. Have the following items with you, if possible: something found blown on the wind (feather, leaf, etc.) and a seed that will be planted later or a raw egg, or even a cup that you'll sprinkle dirt over. Participants may also have a chalice or candle, their own items for grounding and centering, and food & drink for cakes and ale or feasting afterward.

CUUPS holds its **meet-and-greet/business meeting/planning session** on the 2nd Friday of each month at 7:00 pm. At this month's meeting on **March 12**, we will be have a presentation on Romani Spiritual Traditions by one of our local Roma, with our normal meeting afterwards. Please have a candle and lighter ready for the start of the meeting. **Email Victoria Rosquist at bboydbabe@gmail.com for login information for both of these events.**

Wisdom Circle: Herstory

In observance of Women's History Month, we of ripe years will gather around our virtual table to share our stories about how women's roles have changed over the course of our lifetimes. All genders are invited to reflect on how these changes have manifested in our lives and what we've learned along the way. In this 101st year since U.S. women got the vote, we'll also look back at what being female meant in the eras of our mothers and grandmothers, and how their experiences got passed down to our families. To welcome spring, wear something sprightly and bring along your drink of choice + a favorite treat to nibble on. All are welcome to join the circle on

Saturday, March 20 at 10:30 am. Email Jerilyn Bowen at jbowen1@unm.edu for more information. [Click here to join](#) or enter Meeting ID: 962 2094 2211, Passcode: 485006.

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 February 9 and 24 at

<https://uuma.zoom.us/j/736923181>.



Bread, Wine, and Book Club will meet **Friday, March 12 at 7:00 pm** on Zoom. We will be discussing [Small Island](#) by Andrea Levy. Contact Martha Beyerlein at martha.beyerlein@comcast.net for the meeting information.

The Monday Afternoon Book Club will meet **Monday, March 15 at 1:30 pm** on Zoom. The book is [American Dirt](#) by Jeanine Cummins. 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 Best American Science and Nature Writing 2020](#). For meeting information, contact Bob Wood at 352-0212 or roberttwood@gmail.com.

Reading on Racism Book Group's selection for January is [Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents](#) by Isabel Wilkerson. Our meeting is **March 24, 3:00-5:00 pm**. To join us and receive the Zoom link, please contact Kent Madden at revmadden22@gmail.com.



First Unitarian

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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.