



# THE MESSENGER

FIRST UNITARIAN

Albuquerque • East Mountains • Socorro

September 2021

## This Month's Theological Theme Is Embracing Possibility.



**The big day is almost here!** On September 12, many of us will elect to return to our first in-person service since March 8, 2020. What a challenge this past year and a half has been! We have waited a long time to return to being in community. It's very exciting, and what a great theme we have for returning: Embracing Possibility.

Now imagine that you are 8 years old. You were 6 when the pandemic began. You were in your last few months of 1st grade and your family was taking Our Whole Lives class together. You were really looking forward to the party on the last day when, suddenly, it was cancelled. And school changed.

And everything kept changing. It was really, really hard. Now you're in third grade and have just returned to your school classroom. Soon, you'll see some of your friends from church, and you will all have changed a lot. Your sister, who was in 4th grade when this started, is now going into youth group.

### These are huge leaps for our kids and youth to make.

Why does a family with children come to church? I think the main reason is community, the same reason for many of us. For adults, seeing someone after a year and a half isn't uncommon. Some of us don't even visit our families that often. For children, it's a very big deal. Church is unique for families because it's a community that the whole family participates in. One of our Religious Education community traditions was the RE BBQ, a big communal party for all our families and volunteers, right before we started another church year. We'd rent a bouncy house and sometimes hire a band, families would bring food and drink to share, children would play, and RE parents and teachers would eat and chat. Slowly children would gravitate back to their parents, tired but happy with ice cream and toppings. One of many fond memories of our RE community, which last happened in September 2019.

### How can we help our children, youth, and families?

Returning is full of complexities. Whether you're involved in planning for a return to in-person worship, a small group, or a group of children and volunteers, the logistics may be complicated, but so are the uncertainties and emotions that are part of what we're about to do. There are bound to be some bumps in the road ahead. How do we help each other? Be kind, be patient, be understanding, be aware, be flexible. Be forgiving. Above all, be welcoming. Children are—and will continue to be—an important part of our church community, welcome everywhere. Please refer to the RE Page in this Messenger to see what we will be offering to children and youth, both virtually and in-person.

I will end with the words of our UUA President, the Rev. Susan Frederick Gray: "We must all remain flexible in our plans, policies and guidance, centering care for the most vulnerable and staying committed to protecting each other's health and safety." Wise guidance for all of us.

Mia Noren

Director of Religious Education, Credentialed

## Re-Opening the Sanctuary: From Our Senior Minister

Just days after we announced that we would reopen the sanctuary on September 12, the pandemic sent yet another curveball: a fourth wave spurred by the virus's Delta variant. Like other UU churches across the country, we (your ministers, COVID Advisory Council, and Board) have been wondering how this should impact reopening plans. On the one hand, remaining all virtual on Sundays would eliminate the risk of contributing to the spread and is seen by many as the most inclusive option. It is safe for those who cannot be vaccinated or who are at especially high risk. On the other hand, for a variety of reasons, not everyone made the switch to virtual church. Some cannot consistently manage the technology. Some just aren't able to feel connected online. And with the rest of the state open, carefully planned Sunday services are unlikely to be a significant factor in the overall case rate.



After much discernment, we have decided to go forward as planned with reopening. As long as the state public health order permits large groups (**continue reading on page 3**)

# Worship Calendar for September

## **Starting on Sunday, September 12: Two Worship Services!**

### **Virtual Worship: Sundays at 9:00 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](#).

### **In-Person Worship: Sundays at 11:00 am in the Sanctuary**

With the same sermon topic as the virtual service and live music, worship in the sanctuary will happen weekly at 11:00 am. Social distancing will be observed and masks will be required.

## **September 5 (Zoom at 11:00 am Only)**

### **“About Hope”**

#### ***Matt Pargeter-Villareal, Ministerial Intern***

In the midst of the global pandemic and rising new cases due to the Delta variant, there is much uncertainty about what the future will hold, and whether we will ever return to a sense of “normal” again. Matt offers a message of how we can find hope, inspired by the life and the words of Julian of Norwich and the music of UU minister/songwriter Rev. Meg Barnhouse.

## **September 12 (Zoom at 9:00 am, In-Person at 11:00 am)**

### **“Embracing Possibility”**

#### ***The Rev. Angela Herrera***

First Unitarian has had two Sunday services for many years. Now that one is on Zoom and one is in the sanctuary, what possibilities lie before us? In our personal lives as well as at church, how do we embrace possibility?

## **September 19**

### **“The Possibility of Imperfection”**

#### ***The Rev. Angela Herrera***

The rest of this sermon title might as well be “and the Impossibility of Perfection.” We all know it’s impossible to be perfect, and, well, sometimes that really stinks. But it also opens the door to one of our superpowers as humans.

## **September 26**

### **“The Possibilities of Gratitude”**

#### ***The Rev. Bob LaVallee***

Everything is just so much *more* these days, and it’s hard to stay present, joyful, and above all, grateful. We talk a lot about how being grateful changes the way we see and feel, but how about the impact on other people? And why is it so hard to accept gratitude from other people?

## **Virtual Vespers**

### **Wednesdays at 7:00 pm**

These short (25-minute) services offer a midweek respite with readings, music, meditation, and prayer.

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

## **Join Us in Ordaining Jane Davis**

Our congregation will have the pleasure of **ordaining our former Ministerial Intern, Jane Davis, on Tuesday, September 7 at 6:30 pm**. The ordination service will be on Zoom and will include Jane’s home congregation, Bradford Community Church UU in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

**Meeting ID: 953 3456 5697**



# Community News

***(Reopening Our Sanctuary, continued)***

**beginning September 12, there will be two Sunday services: 9:00 am on Zoom, and 11:00 am in the Sanctuary** with a video relay to the Social Hall.

Each service has its advantages. Both are live. Both services are “real” church. In fact, we’ve had two Sunday services for many years at First Unitarian, and each has always had its own flavor—just ask the ministers! One service has simply moved online now.

**Here’s what to expect at each one:**

## **9:00 am on Zoom**

- continued high-quality, live services
- pajama pants welcome!
- the same preacher as 11:00 am, seen up close!
- a Time for All Ages every week
- Joys & Concerns
- continued mix of recorded & live music
- interaction via the chat
- “coffee hour” in breakout rooms
- Religious Education for children at 10:00 am

## **11:00 am in the Sanctuary**

- masks required
- social distancing expected
- pajamas would be awkward
- the same preacher as 9:00, three dimensional!
- speakers wear masks when not speaking
- live music
- vaccinated singers may be unmasked while performing
- a return to our traditional prayer format in which names may be spoken with the sound of the chime (but there is no Joy & Concerns)
- congregational singing outdoors only
- no coffee hour, yet
- Religious Education for children outdoors on the playground, with playtime after, supervised by vaccinated adults

Due to the high rate of transmission and the fact that even vaccinated people can spread COVID, we encourage unvaccinated UUs to avoid indoor groups at this time. We also encourage all eligible people to get vaccinated. However, it is also important to remember that we cannot make assumptions about

each other’s level of immunity, regardless of age or other factors. Some folks may be in vaccine trials, others may have natural immunity from a recent infection. If it’s important to you to know the vaccine status of others around you, the 9:00 service is your best option for now. Attending that service also shows solidarity with our siblings who cannot come in person.

In these times, there are many questions—and few clear answers—about how to be a church. Like other organizations, First Unitarian is coping with major disruptions in operations, staffing, and community connection, which add to the challenge of finding our “new normal.” What helps the most is to remember that:

- Everyone (inside and outside of church) has just been through something very hard,
- We need one another, and
- Everyone is doing their best.

Whether you join in online or on campus on September 12, I look forward to seeing you. It is good to be together.

Love, Angela

**Watch your email for a survey about your plans for worship on September 12.**

## **We Light a Candle**

We remember young Santiago Carvahlo, who died unexpectedly this month. We mourn the loss of such a young person and hold his mother and brother in our hearts.

We grieve the death of church member Larry McGoldrick, and hold his family and friends in our care.

We hold Wendy Simms-Small and her family in our hearts as they grieve the death of her stepfather.

We grieve with Jerilyn Bowen, whose youngest sister has died unexpectedly.

We send healing thoughts to Nancy Cushman, Margo Milleret, Louise Gerstle, and Jill DesJardins, who are all recovering from surgeries.

***If you’re experiencing difficulties, health issues, or transitions, you can reach out to our Caring Network at [caring@uuabq.org](mailto:caring@uuabq.org).***

# Community News

## Membership Milestones

### **Welcome to Our Newest Members, Who Joined the Church in August!**

Erin Hagenow

Judith Riley

Phillip Robinson

Ben Sadek-Kennedy

Sharz Weeks

### **Happy Membership Anniversary in September!**

#### Five Years

Gwen Bugg

#### Ten Years

Carol Oslund

#### Fifteen Years

Anne Grillet & Rich Scheik

#### Twenty Years

Jetta Reynolds

## Addiction Recovery Ministry

*Denis Mecham's The Addiction Ministry Handbook, 2004, pg. 22:*

"Above all, recovery is about a deep opening to life that releases the individual to love and reconnection. It means learning how to embrace both a yearning for transcendence and the pains, uncertainties, and mortality that define the human condition. It means abandoning the certainty that accompanies a chemically induced escape from our human frailties and embracing the uncertainty of living from a place of trust in love and goodness. Being in recovery means being in the freely chosen state of vulnerability."

Contact us at [recovery@uuabq.org](mailto:recovery@uuabq.org). If you are looking for support, **join us on Sunday, September 5 & Sunday, September 19**, at 12:00 pm right after services.

**Meeting ID: 961 4648 2750 /Passcode: 425559**

## Food Pantry Update

Our food pantry has continued to hand out sacks of food every Wednesday throughout the pandemic. We changed to a drive-through delivery, and this has worked so well that we may want to continue this way even after it is safe to ask people to walk inside. We have fresh produce for our clients every week, which we get at no cost from Roadrunner Food Bank, and we offer cat and dog food in small amounts to our pet-owning clients.

Since March of 2019 we have recorded the names of over 500 different individuals coming for food. We have a wonderful group of clients; many have medical problems, most have homes, and all are grateful. We hear "God bless you" regularly.

To donate food or find out how you can help, [contact the office](#).

## Board of Directors Update

As a Type-A control-challenged person, I've always resisted the teaching of Buddhism, with its emphasis on acceptance and the wisdom (that feels like admonishment) that pain comes from resisting the reality of what is. We find ourselves in such a painful place with seemingly no good or safe choices. And while acknowledging how much this moment sucks is important, it actually makes things worse to rail against what we cannot change.

Rev. Angela shared a one-word mantra that a wise woman chants: "Adjust." Time permitting, there's a 3-word version, too: "I am learning." I can feel the wisdom and the potential healing in learning how to stay in the reality of that mindful mindset, even as I realize it's going to take some practice to do it.

Like many groups in our church, the Board is struggling with the question of how to do our work in this COVID reality. Many of us have never met in person. Some of us are feeling intensely the need to interact in person; some of us have medical risks that make that inadvisable. How do we accommodate and care for the full spectrum of health concerns and challenges and risk levels and needs of all our members? This, too, feels like a skill that will take tremendous mindfulness and practice. As we try and fail and try again, we grow as we practice understanding, accountability, grace, forgiveness, and repair.

For the humanists among us, this is a moment of great humility and hope. While a global public health crisis has thrust this moment upon us—and it sucks, it really really sucks—this is also the work of our faith. How do we love across difference? How do we care for everyone in our congregation? How do we do the work within ourselves and with each other to grow our patience, our care and acceptance of others, our understanding of other perspectives, our ability to forgive and ask for forgiveness, to turn again and again toward each other and not away?

We adjust. We keep learning together.

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

# Religious Education



## From Our Director of Religious Education

***“Rarely, if ever, are any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion.”***

- bell hooks



Greetings!

This Fall, we are practicing our theme, Embracing Possibility, as we welcome our children, youth, and families back to Religious Education programming. We are working to support our families and planning to have something in place for all. I want to take this space to spell out our plans, which are, of course, subject to change. These are complicated times!

Sunday morning:

- Join Mia or RE volunteer teachers at 10:00 am for elementary RE on Zoom. This will look a lot like the Zoom classes we held last year—for half an hour, we'll light a chalice, introduce ourselves, see a story, and discuss it through the lens of our theme.
- Join Alana and our Youth Advisors at 10:00 am for youth group. This meeting is hybrid, so that all our youth can be together, whether they join in-person at the church or virtually.
- Join RE staff and volunteers on the playground at 11:00 for in-person elementary programming. In-person children will receive the same lesson that their virtual friends got at 10:00 am, followed by playtime on our playground. Everyone is required to be masked and maintain a safe distance.
- Children 3 and up are welcome on the playground. Children under three should remain with their parents.
- Our masked and vaccinated volunteers are welcome (and needed!) during the class and for playtime on the playground.

Another component of every start-up is teacher training! This year, you can volunteer for the virtual or in-person playground class & play time. There will be a Zoom meeting to meet and train virtual volunteers, and an in-person meeting for our in-person volunteers. We will be contacting all our registered families and known volunteers to participate!

Looking forward to seeing you again soon, either online or in person!

**Mia Noren**

**Director of Religious Education, Credentialed**  
[Dre@uuabq.org](mailto:Dre@uuabq.org)

## 2021-22 Registration

There's still time to register your family in the Religious Education program! You can register anytime, but if you **do so before September 12**, you'll receive a Pocket Chalice Making Kit for each child/youth and be entered to win our Grand Prize—a gift certificate to Empire Board Games Library!

[Click here to register](#) your family or use this QR code to go to the new Google form registration. Please register even if you have registered prior to August 2021. This new form will automatically populate a new spreadsheet for us and will ensure our contact information is up to date!



Registering ensures that you will continue to receive updates about RE Programming via email and our First UU Families Facebook page!



## Youth News

Summer has ended, and hopefully we've all transitioned smoothly back to a school routine. It's also time for us to get back together regularly for YoUUth group.

The theme this month is Embracing

Possibilities, which is arguably the most important part of our faith. Historically, when others saw depravity and sin at the core of human identity, we saw potential. When many were preaching that this world was fallen, we fell in love with the possibility of heaven on earth. These days it's hard to feel optimistic, and too easy to worry about a world that feels broken, and we might feel alone. But, together, something magic begins to occur. When we all focus our gaze on the horizon together, possibility surprisingly appears. So, friends, maybe this isn't simply the month of embracing possibility; maybe it is the month of embracing possibility together!

**Alana Rodriguez**

**Youth Programs Coordinator, RE Assistant**  
[youth@uuabq.org](mailto:youth@uuabq.org)

First Unitarian is hiring Childcare Staff to help supervise and care for the children of our congregation. [For a full job description, click here.](#) To apply, contact Alana Rodriguez at [atreasst@uuabq.org](mailto:atreasst@uuabq.org).

# Connect & Learn

## Adult Faith Formation Sunday Explorations

Join us for community and conversation on a variety of topics. Bring your tea or coffee and settle in for a sharing of ideas. **Our meeting time is changing to 10:00 am starting September 12.**

[Meeting ID: 842 4289 2753](#)

[Passcode: 041625](#)

### **September 5 at 9:30 am—Opening to Possibility.**

How shall we open ourselves to considering, even embracing, new opportunities? Our UU faith holds that we are not sinners at our core, rather we are humans of possibility and potential. What practices, people, ideas support you considering, “Why not?” when opportunities arise for you?

Angela Merkert, facilitator.

### **September 12—Opportunities to See Our Community with New Eyes.**

What could be different? Let’s consider the possibilities that would make the Albuquerque metro area, your neighborhood, an even more thriving community. Let’s envision what could be possible if we responded, “Why not?” to new ideas.

Angela Merkert, facilitator.

### **September 19—Possibility as a Gathering of Power.**

The poet Robert Bly in his poem “Things to Think” writes, “Think in ways you’ve never thought before....” What powers, energy, faith emerges when we change our perspective, look at our thoughts and the world through new lenses, and open ourselves to, and create, change?

Angela Merkert, facilitator.

**September 26—Nature: *Finding the Mother Tree*** is a compelling book by Suzanne Simard, a professor at the U. Of British Columbia and world’s leading forest ecologist. Her insights point toward a paradigm shift in how we view trees in the forest and their connections to one another. Time permitting, we’ll move to “Arboreal reverence.”

Ron Friederich, facilitator.

## Covenant Groups Will Be Back!

Are you looking for an opportunity to practice deep listening and sharing in a small group environment. This is what Covenant Groups offer you.

**Covenant Groups begin in October.** Members commit to meet twice a month through April, a total of 14 meetings. Sign-ups will be online, and meetings will be on Zoom, with in-person options possible in the future.

If you were in a Covenant Group last year, you will receive an email soon about how to sign up this year. If you’ve participated in a Covenant Group in a prior year at First U, email [covenant@uuabq.org](mailto:covenant@uuabq.org) for instructions on how to sign up this year.

Those who have never been in a Covenant Group at First Unitarian are asked to attend one of two informational Zoom sessions before signing up for a group—either on **Sunday, September 5 or Tuesday, September 7.** [Go to our website to register for a session.](#)

## A Note from Susan Peck

I am full of gratitude to First Unitarian for supporting my sabbatical this summer. I was able to rest, travel, study, and play in our Land of Enchantment.



At home, I gardened, ate healthy food, took naps with my cats. I drove to western Nebraska for a much-needed visit with my aging parents and three siblings. I spent a week in Taos star-gazing, mushroom hunting, and hanging out with amazing musicians.

I enjoyed time for study. I listened to podcasts, read books by Brené Brown and Charles Duhigg, practiced music, signed up for “somatic experiencing” body/mind work, attended the online retreat “Threshold of the New Tomorrow,” and sang in Quintessence’s Songapalooza. I’m composing a song cycle for Chalice Choir, on the joys and griefs of breathing: creating harmony vs. pandemic risks.

I loved having time for outdoor adventures: hiking on Sandia Ridge, biking in the Bosque and foothills, learning rock-climbing. The magic of climbing is reciprocal trust: first belaying the lead climber, then climbing a vertical face, placing feet and hands on nubbins of rock, safely on belay.

May we support one another in trust and faith, as we wait patiently to sing safely in harmony once again.

# Groups & Activities

## CUUPS This Month

Join Coyote Willow CUUPS for a virtual **Mabon Ritual on September 18 at 7:00 pm**. The autumn equinox is a time of balance, when day and night are of equal length and the path forward leads to cooler days, longer nights, and color-changing leaves. It is the time of Mabon, the fruit harvest, and second of three harvest celebrations in the pagan wheel of the year. Bring your stories, songs, and memories to share, and fruits, vegetables, or other harvest foods to eat as we give thanks. Also have a chalice/candle with a source of flame.

CUUPS holds its Planning and Social Circle on Zoom on the 2nd Friday of each month at 7:00 pm. On September 10, you are welcome to join us and get the inside scoop on all the fun we'll be having for the next few months. Please have a candle and source of flame nearby for the start of the meeting.

**Email Victoria Rosquist at [bboydbabe@gmail.com](mailto:bboydbabe@gmail.com) for login information for these events.**

## Urgency and Agency:Join Earth Web

Yogi Berra famously reminded us that: "It's very hard to make predictions, especially about the future!" But predictions are flying around about the Climate Emergency. Some are saying that we are facing the collapse of civilization and the extinction of humanity. Others, like Michael E. Mann, a scientist who worked on the IPCC report published on August 9, are more optimistic. He talks about "urgency and agency." The situation is dire, but we do have what we need to mitigate and draw down climate destroying gases from the atmosphere. It will take all of us, working at all levels to make this happen. It won't be easy. But facing it together and working with others makes it easier, and more fun! Join us for our **Earth Web meeting on September 12 from 12:15–1:45** and we'll do this! [Email Marilyn O'Boyle](#) for meeting information.

## Wisdom Circle: Preparing for the End of Life

**Saturday, September 18, 10:00-noon**

As we move into the harvest season of falling leaves, we'll meet around our virtual table again, this time to talk about preparing for the end of life in practical ways. What do we need to do to set our affairs in order? We'll also share resources for doing that and reflect on how

it feels to be taking these steps. Newcomers and old hats both welcome.

Given the Delta variant surge and church guidelines, we now anticipate continuing to meet on Zoom into the fall.

Contact Jerilyn Bowen at [jbowen1@unm.edu](mailto:jbowen1@unm.edu).

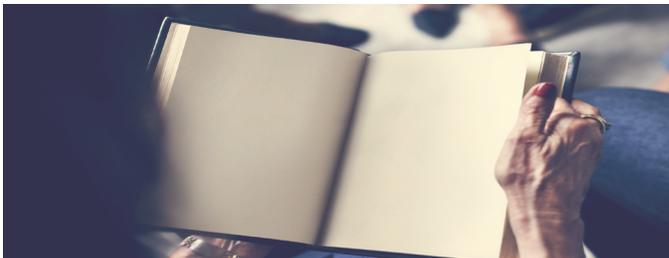
**Meeting ID: 962 2094 2211**

**Password: 485006**

## Pagan Pride Day

If pandemic conditions allow, Coyote Willow CUUPS will support Pagan Pride Day on **Sunday, September 26 at Bataan Park** with a booth and an altar in memorial to those who have died during the pandemic. This year's theme is Harvest Renaissance. All are welcome to attend the festivities from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm—pandemic cautions are encouraged, and you can come and go as you wish. Because parking is sparse in this residential neighborhood, carpooling is encouraged. Admission is a donation of non-perishable food for the First U Food Pantry. For more information go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/AlbuquerquePaganPrideDay>



**The Monday Afternoon Book Club** will meet **Monday, September 20 at 10:00 am** at Judy Rapping's home. This month's book is **Anxious People** by **Fredrik Backman**. Please contact Joyce Etheridge at 509-308-5523 for further information.

**The Bread, Wine, and Book Club** will meet on **Friday, September 10 at 7:00 pm**. Our book this month is **The Midnight Library** by **Mark Haig**. Contact Martha Beyerlein for more information at [martha.beyerlein@comcast.net](mailto:martha.beyerlein@comcast.net).



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### **Sunday Worship Services**

#### **Virtual Worship**

9:00 am

#### **Albuquerque**

11:00 am in the Sanctuary

#### **East Mountains**

11:00 AM

1 Deanna Ln.

Edgewood

(off Dinkle Road)

#### **Socorro**

4:00 PM

Epiphany Episcopal  
Church, 908 Leroy Place

### **Social Justice Council Auction Funds Community Needs**

Our Social Justice Council (SJC) announces that our Annual Auction is scheduled virtually again for November 1-30, an entire month so everyone can participate. This includes a live auction for special items the evening of November 6, either in person or by Zoom, depending on conditions at the time. **Yes, we are asking you to donate!** Think about what you can donate that others would value. Check the Weekly Broadsheet as we provide updates and creative ideas for donations. This event lets us connect as a congregation, sharing talent and skills to raise funds for Social Justice that will go back into the community where it is most needed. And this year—like last year—it's needed more than ever. Please contact Benita at [Benita.terrell@earthlink.net](mailto:Benita.terrell@earthlink.net) to discuss how to make your donations. On behalf of SJC, we thank you.