



THE MESSENGER

FIRST UNITARIAN

Albuquerque • East Mountains • Socorro

December 2021

This Month's Theological Theme Is Opening to Joy.



We approach the winter solstice, longest night, turning point of the seasons. Gardens lie fallow, trees shed leaves, the sun sets early. We pull on cozy sweaters and gather with friends and family, eating tamales and biscochitos, gazing at twinkling lights. We wait impatiently for the pandemic to ease, so that we can join

in full-voiced song once again. Yet sometimes opening to joy is difficult in the quiet dark.

Author Brené Brown writes about the difference between happiness and joy: Happiness is a fleeting emotion, connected to external events. Joy is a practice, connected to gratitude. She compares a joyful life to a string of twinkle lights: "Joy is not constant. It comes to us in moments. A joyful life is not a floodlight of joy. That would eventually become unbearable. I believe a joyful life is made up of joyful moments gracefully strung together by trust, gratitude, inspiration, and faith."

I am grateful for the joy I find in the inspiring people in our church, the astonishing beauty of our landscape, for breath melded in harmony and rhythm. What brings you joy?

Susan Peck, Director of Music

A Time for Giving Back

There are numerous studies about the physical and mental health benefits of volunteering—a quick online search will serve up many examples. Especially during a time like now, when many of us are feeling isolated and depression is on the rise, finding a way to give to others is a highly effective way to improve your mood and feel a deeper connection to those around you. Last month, we sent out a survey asking questions about who you are and what you would like to offer in terms of your time and talent. **You can still take the survey here:** <https://forms.gle/iTZmrpmcXQiUEPBj9>. We're sharing the results with staff members and volunteer leaders, and eventually, they will be in a searchable database.

One of the groups eager to use the results is **First Unitarian's Leadership Succession Committee (LSC)**, which has the responsibility of preparing a slate of candidates for elections held at the Congregation's Annual Meeting at the end of January. Specifically, the LSC makes recommendations for nominees on the Board of Directors, and its Endowment and Leadership Succession Committees. This year, the LSC has been challenged by the congregation's limited opportunities to meet and engage with each other. Because of this, **they are asking church members who are interested in serving to contact them directly** for more information about the responsibilities of each role. Contact information is below:

Marilyn O'Boyle, Chair: marilynlea@aol.com;
cell: 505-453-1434

Lucy Silva: cell/text: 520-204-4318

Jordan Jones: jordan.douglas.jones@gmail.com;
text: 505-417-1837

Sue Coates: escoates@gmail.com;
cell/text 501-617-0598)

Serving in one of these important roles is a wonderful way to discover a deeper connection to your church community and your own purpose in the world. Please reach out and let us know you're ready!

Worship Calendar for December

Virtual Worship: Sundays at 9:00 am

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

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

Social distancing will be observed and masks will be required.

Virtual Vespers: Wednesdays at 7:00 pm

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

No Vespers Service on Wednesday, December 29

December 5

“Joy”

The Rev. Angela Herrera

What is the relationship between pleasure and joy? Between joy and justice? We'll delve into these questions and how to increase joy in our lives in this introduction to December's theological theme.

Blue December Service



**Wednesday, December 8 at 7:00 pm
on Zoom, Meeting ID: 593 831 292**

The Ministers and Care Team

The cultural noise and speed of the December holiday season can be a strain for many of us. For some, the expectations of peace, love, and joy surrounded by family and friends is not been their experience. For others, December may be the anniversary of a memorable loss in your life: the death of a loved one; the end of a precious relationship, or another serious disappointment. Fewer hours of daylight make some of us blue at this time of year. If, for any reason, this time of year finds you longing for a calm, reflective approach to the season, you are invited to the Blue December service. Music, silence, companionship, and thoughtful words will surround and comfort us all. Have a candle or two on hand to light. This service will run slightly longer than most vespers.

December 12

“Lighten Up! The Spiritual Practice of Cultivating and Expressing Joy”

The Rev. Katie Culbert

Do you dance like no one is watching? Have you laughed so loud that it can be heard across the room? These are ways we express and cultivate joy. How do we create a life of blissfulness, a life that prioritizes happiness? How do we surrender to the expression of jubilation?

The Rev. Katie Culbert has worked as a Director of Religious Exploration and is a Chaplain, most recently employed at Tampa General Hospital. Katie lives in Tampa with her two teenage boys, Desi and Casey.

December 19

“Thieves of Joy”

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

Sometimes we work against our own joy without realizing that we're doing it. Rev. Bob will talk about the corrosive power of sarcasm, cynicism, and envy.

Christmas Eve Services, Friday, December 24

5:00 pm on Zoom only

Christmas Eve Pageant



This year the puppets are taking over the pageant! Mayhem ensues. This presentation will also be available on the First U web site for folks to watch on their own schedule.

6:30 pm Caroling in the Courtyard

Yearning to sing your favorite Christmas songs? Bundle up, mask up, and join us in the church courtyard at 6:30 on Christmas Eve for traditional Christmas caroling before worship.



7:00 pm in the Sanctuary

The Rev. Angela Herrera



All are welcome to this in person Christmas Eve service, where we'll pray, light candles, and contemplate an ancient story that is still unfolding. Weather permitting, we will take our candlelight

out into the courtyard at the end of the service for congregational singing. Masks and social distancing are required at in-person services. Overflow will be provided in the Social Hall with video livestreamed from the sanctuary.

December 26

“The One Where We Talk About Boxing Day”

Matt Pargeter-Villarreal, Intern Minister

The day after Christmas, December 26, known to many people as Boxing Day, is celebrated in many different countries around the world, but unknown to most people in the U.S. Join Matt, our Intern Minister, for the history of this celebration—and what it has to teach us about what is truly important in this holiday season.

Community News

Membership Milestones

Welcome to our newest members who joined the church in November!

Laurie Barnes & Tom Tipton

Jess Bess

Mozely Bleistein

Nancy Gilson

Kathie Thannisch

Ethan Van

Happy Membership Anniversary in November!

One Year

Jeff Dixon

Kenny Jones

Betsy Kruger

Linda Smith

Five Years

Nancy Bowen & Howell Lind

Carrie Engelstad

Aroop Mangalik

Brooke Reedlunn

Joanne & Michael Roake

Michelle Steinley-Bumgarner

Fifteen Years

Jayson & Nissane Capps

Twenty-Five Years

Alison O'Leary & Daniel Rask

Fifty-Five Years

Gary Carlson

Family Promise Update

We had another successful Host Week for Family Promise in November, providing food, laundry, and supplies to support families. We also cleared out the supplies we had used to host families in our Social Hall, which went directly to the families and to Family Promise ABQ to be sold in their parking sale, netting over \$5300! Our volunteers who helped with this and so much more were: Kevin Whitmore, Jenny Parsons, Bruce Newton, Lucy Silva, Melisa Nicoud, Sonya Benson, Andrea Mason, Ruth Ann Cooper, Maria Stevens, Martha Cook, Dawn Leach, Amy Sun, Paula Fisher, Jenn Solan, Sue Roberts, and Kathy Nunn. We have scheduled four host weeks for 2022—we will keep you posted as volunteer opportunities pop up! It takes a village to make things happen, and we have a beautiful village!!!

We Light a Candle

We grieve with the friends and family of Dale Arnink, who has died. Dale was the minister of the Los Alamos Unitarian Church from 1976-2000.

We hold Michael Judd in our hearts as he grieves the death of his wife Liza after a long illness.

We hold Katerina Azhdaji in our loving care as she grieves the sudden death of her young daughter, Mila.

We light a candle for Richard Brown, and Alice & Bill Willis while they experience health challenges and life changes.

We send healing thoughts to Sherril Spencer, Sue Redfern-Campbell, and Harlan LaRue VanCamp, who are all recovering from hospital visits.

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

"The History We Are Making"

In this sermon on November 14, Rev. Angela talked about history, hope, and change, and she shared some more personal news. If you missed it, you can still watch or read the sermon on our website: <https://uuabq.org/sermons/>. Her message starts around 24:24.

Staff News

The church office will be closed the week of December 27 to give church staff a time of collective rest at the end of this second pandemic year. Rev. Angela will be on call for any urgent pastoral needs that week. (Follow the phone menu options through to her personal voicemail at the church office, or email her at aherrera@uuabq.org).

Thank you to all of our staff and volunteers for their resilience, creativity, and adaptation.

Church in the Time of COVID

As booster shots become available and infection rates rise and fall and rise again, First Unitarian continues with the policies we adopted before reopening in September: <https://uuabq.org/current-covid-advisory-council-recommendations/>. We will continue to practice social distancing and masking at in-person services, and offering high-quality Zoom services, for the foreseeable future. Worship leaders are vaccinated, and those who speak or sing without masks must receive a negative COVID test result within a few days beforehand. If required by public health orders, we will go all virtual again. And if the pandemic throws us all another curveball, we'll adapt! We are glad to see you at whichever service feels right for you. **Virtually or in person, it is good to be together.**

Community News

First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque 2021 Financial Update (Fund 01- Operating Revenue & Expenses)

As of 10/31/2021	2021 Budget	2021 Oct YTD Actual	2021 Forecast	Comments
Contribution Revenue	982,436	798,592	929,761	Contributions are down, Need 2021 pledge payments
Other Revenue	48,950	30,527	30,845	Low due to deferred reopening
TOTAL REVENUE	1,031,386	829,119	960,607	
Compensation Expenses	782,725	616,409	735,486	Low due to deferred reopening
Operating Expenses	139,000	106,327	120,023	Low due to deferred reopening
Program Expenses	31,800	17,966	19,869	Low due to deferred reopening
Capital Expenses	86,084	63,679	86,084	Expected as budgeted
Other Expenses	98,333	84,919	99,195	Slightly higher than budgeted
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,137,942	889,300	1,060,657	
EXCESS INCOME/EXPENSES	-106,556	-60,180	-100,051	
Allocated Surplus- Prior Yr	106,556	106,556	106,556	
ENDING SURPLUS / DEFICIT	0	46,376	6,505	Ending Fund Balance

[this link](#) or enter:

Meeting ID: 875 7255 6276

Passcode: UUABQ3701

The Board is **daring to dream of a year of learning and action as the church commits to an anti-racism/anti-oppression journey**—and what our leadership role will be. We're asking the congregation to focus on this work in preparation, and with intent, to adopt the 8th Principle at the Annual Meeting in January 2023.

As we head in that direction, **we need three board members**. We are looking for established church members who have already done some anti-racism/anti-oppression work toward awareness of bias, skill-building in listening across difference, and racial resilience in challenging conversations, whether at church, at work, or in their personal lives. We need people who lead with love, who are compassionate with themselves and others, and who are able to make mistakes, learn, and repair.

Please see the article by the Leadership Succession Committee on the front page to indicate your interest in serving on the board. The details of our year of action will take planning and coordination among all our church groups and the help and commitment of all church members. The Board will form a task force to help organize and support this intentional work to explore, uncover, and dismantle racism and oppression. Together we will seek ways to build love and learning across difference, and to celebrate multiple cultures and ways of being in the world. We know we have work to do to be more transparent and intentional in how we cultivate leadership, operate as a board, hire staff, and do the work of the church.

Many of our church groups and church members have already begun this work—the Widening the Circle group, the People of Color group, anti-racism book clubs, our Membership Committee, White Fragility groups, Beloved Conversations trainings, etc. We begin this next year walking on a path that is already being explored by many in our congregation. We set out on this journey together heading toward joy and belonging, knowing that this work will bring us opportunities to deepen our relationships, our faith, and the power of our love.

The next board meeting will be December 21 at 6:30 pm via Zoom. [The link is listed on the Church website](#) under Governance. Board meetings are always open to members and friends, so you are welcome any time!

- Mikaela Renz-Whitmore, President

Monthly Financial Update

Our Operating Fund financial position remains in good shape. October saw a moderate uptick in contributions, which were coming in slower in previous months. We reduced our operating expenses with the campus closed most of the year, but we still need all 2021 pledges paid by year-end. We currently have an Operating Fund Balance of \$46,376 and we are still expecting a large amount of year-end Pledge Payments in November and December. If you have questions, please contact Phillip Robinson, our Director of Finance, at accountant@uuabq.org. Thank you for your generosity!

Board of Directors Update

What a strange year it's been. Looking around, I see people strained to breaking with keeping our doors open and serving each other—in times when needs are the highest we've seen in our lifetimes, and our capacity to serve is perhaps at its lowest. I admit that the Board has reflected that fatigue, and sometimes it's felt like all we can do to keep the basic functions of the church working by replacing leadership to spell those who have needed to step away. I want to thank everyone for giving your last dregs of grace to church staff and leaders; we are all doing the best we can.

There are bigger things in motion. The Board's **Strategic Planning Task Force** will host breakout rooms after Sunday church services on **December 5 and December 12** (both in-person and Zoom), as well as **Thursday, December 9** at 6:30 pm on Zoom, to share the strategic directions that have been emerging. We look forward to hearing from you! [Click](#)

Religious Education



From Our Director of Religious Education

“I don’t think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains.”

-Anne Frank, from *The Diary of a Young Girl*



Greetings!

“Opening to Joy”—what a theme to go out on this year! If you didn’t learn how to find joy in tough times, now is a good time to start! You all know that presented with a half-filled glass of water, the pessimist says that it is half-empty, and the optimist says that it is half-full. It is both, both half-full and half-empty, at the same time. It’s just a matter of your perspective. If you can change your perspective about the glass of water, you may be able to redirect your gaze from emptiness and see fullness.

Artists learn to see and notice the details in the world around them. Our Small Group materials this month mention designer and author Ingrid Fetell Lee, who intentionally looks for joy every day, a practice she calls “Joyspotting.” She says, “Whereas before I might not have looked twice at the orange traffic cones on the street, now I savored their pops of color against the gray sidewalk. Whereas before I might have ignored the man sitting next to me on the subway, now I noticed his polka dotted socks and smiled. The world seemed to be teeming with tiny, joyful surprises. All I had to do was look for them.”

This little paragraph has stuck with me. What a useful skill to teach your children—spotting the little pieces of joy around them. What a fun game this would be to do together!

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

The very best way to stay up to date with the latest in First U RE is to register your children/youth in our program. [Click here to register](#) your family or use this QR code to go to the new Google form registration.



No RE on Sunday, December 26.

Our Current Programming for Children

Our children need time to play. Time spent outside on our playground helps children re-establish connection with adults, other children, and our church environment. If you are comfortable with returning, we are here. If you’re waiting, we’ll be here when you’re ready. The theme of play and interaction will continue.

If you consider yourself part of our RE community, please consider volunteering for one session of play! Click here: <https://tinyurl.com/UUABQplay>. We are not yet asking for volunteer teachers.

At home, parents have been responsible for the Religious Education of their children. Noting that families are not returning in large numbers yet, Mia has begun creating weekly posts and emails featuring a recorded storybook on the theme, and an activity to do with your children. Please give feedback on how this is working for you, how it could be better, or even if you don’t find it helpful.

Youth News



The song “Magic Penny” by Unitarian activist and songwriter Malvina Reynolds includes the lyric, “Love is something if you give it away... you end up having more!” This month we can also say joy is something if you give it away, you end up having more.

Generosity gives us the gift of a warm heart and a sense of wholeness. In fact, we can never be really joyful and happy unless we are generous. The way we’ll explore the theme of Opening to Joy this month is: **Creating Joy:** on the work of whimsy; **Sharing Joy:** on the work of generosity; **Finding Joy (in tough times):** on the work of redirecting our gaze; and, **Celebrating Imperfect Joy:** on the work of looking back and honoring it all.

We are thrilled to be able to offer 7-9 OWL this year. OWL (Our Whole Lives) is a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum co-written by the UUA and UCC churches. Through interactive workshops and activities, students learn science-based information in a safe environment by trained facilitators. To register, [please fill out this form](#) or request it from Alana. Email it to her at reasst@uuabq.org or mail to the church.

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

Connect & Learn

Sunday Explorations

Bring your tea or coffee and join us at 10:00 on Sundays for discussions on a variety of topics related to faith, spirituality, justice concerns, and UU history. "Opening to Joy" will be our focus December 5 & 12.

Meeting ID: 842 4289 2753/Passcode: 041625

December 5: The Language of Abundance, a sermon by the Rev. Lilli Nye Abundance, Gratitude and the Experience of Joy. Angela Merkert, facilitator. <http://www.tparkerchurch.org/sermons/20072008/Abundance.htm>

December 12: Joy and Happiness in Our Lives

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." — Galatians 5:22-23, NASB. Reflections on "the fruit of the Spirit" and its relevance to our lives today. Are Joy and Happiness the same? Angela Merkert, facilitator.

December 19: Nature-Based Spirituality A theological option for UUs, nature-based spirituality may include a God concept or be non-theistic. Our good book is *Reason and Reverence* by William Murry, who enriches Humanism. When in Nature's beauty, do you sense a Creative Force being involved OR can the findings of science, including evolution, explain all of the natural world? Ron Friederich, facilitator.

December 26: No Explorations

Workshop: Preparing the Ground

Body-Based Practices for Our Work in the World

Rev. Bob LaVallee, First Unitarian member Kathryn Fearnside, and community member Mindy Grossberg invite you to participate in *Preparing the Ground*, a two-hour workshop focused on body-based practices that help nurture community. Through embodiment and improv exercises, we will explore grounding, resourcing, and connecting, and what happens within our bodies and nervous systems as we seek to work together toward a more just and loving world.

This workshop will take place on **Sunday, December 5 from 3:00-5:00 pm**, in the Social Hall. To register, send an email to Rev. Bob at blavallee@uuabq.org. Registration is capped at twenty participants, so sign up early!

Afterschool Tutoring News

Our Afterschool Tutoring Program volunteers are busy again, with 16 students from Montezuma Elementary enrolled—somewhat less than the 20 they've had in recent years prior to the pandemic. The students receive physical education each week, and they're enjoying organized enrichment activities like art and free time on the playground. In November, they planted daffodils and other bulbs, with the hope they will come up in the Spring. The shutdown of in-person school last year had a detrimental effect on student achievement, but the tutors are finding that students are more motivated to learn and happy to get the individual help offered by their tutor. Last Wednesday, a third-grade boy struggling to read a first-grade level book turned to his tutor and said, "Reading is fun once you get the hang of it."

Want to help? They are seeking donations of PE equipment, like old tennis rackets, and art supplies. They are also recruiting tutors! Contact Carol Oslund at astp.carol@icloud.com for more information.

Fall Landscape Day

Weather permitting, the Landscape Committee would appreciate your help with our 2nd Fall Cleanup Day, **Saturday, December 4, 9:00-noon**. There's raking, some weeding, spreading more mulch, and trimming and pruning to be done. Any amount of time you can give will be a big help!! Bring your gloves, pruners, and any other tools you like working with. Start the day with free coffee and doughnuts!!

Addiction Recovery Ministry

The First Unitarian Addiction Recovery Ministry utilizes resources that provide education, hope, and healing to those affected by addiction. If you are affected by an addiction or love someone who is, join us for a relaxed, healing hour with those of like minds. We meet via Zoom on the first & third Sundays of the month at 12:30 after services. Our December gatherings will be on **Sundays, December 5 & 19**.

Meeting ID: 961 4648 2750 Passcode: 425559

Contact us at recovery@uuabq.org

Groups & Activities

Winter Solstice Wisdom Circle

Saturday, December 18, 10:00am—noon

As the year bottoms out, we elders will gather around our table to mark this nadir turning point in the cycle of the seasons. We'll reflect on the inner meaning of this passage while sharing our cherished memories of past holiday observances. Along with that, we'll talk about our most painful or challenging experiences of the annual festivities. Then, together, we'll design a winter solstice observance we'd like to pass on for future generations.

We'll meet in person in Memorial Hall at the church, across the courtyard from the newly renovated Social Hall. If you'd like to attend on Zoom instead, let Jerilyn know. (At this point, the best we can do on that is via a laptop computer through which members can participate remotely.) Come one, come all, and bring your beverage of choice!

Contact Jerilyn Bowen at jbowen1@unm.edu for information.

Earth Web's Green Corner

Earth Web has an exciting program lined up for our December meeting! Writer Laura Paskus will be with us to talk about environmental issues in New Mexico and answer our questions. Laura is a longtime reporter based in Albuquerque, currently the environmental reporter for NM PBS, where she produces the monthly series, "Our Land: New Mexico's Environmental Past, Present & Future" for "New Mexico in Focus". She is the author of *At the Precipice, New Mexico's Changing Climate*, published 2020 by UNM Press. Rev. Bob spoke about her book and efforts in his sermon on climate change in September. Earth Web is also scheduling a book club studying *At the Precipice*. We will meet 7:00-8:30 pm every other Sunday starting January 30 (then February 13 & 27, and March 13). Join us **on Zoom December 12 at 2:00!** If you are not on the Earth Web email list and need the Zoom link, contact Marilyn O'Boyle (marilynlea@aol.com).

CUUPS Yule Ritual

Join Coyote Willow CUUPS for a Yule Ritual on **Saturday, December 11 at 7:00 pm** in the Social Hall. Yule is a celebration of the season, an opportunity to manifest new desires, and to support each other in difficult times. This will be a hybrid event; you can attend either in-person or through Zoom. To attend in person, RSVP to bboydbabe@gmail.com. To get the link for Zoom or to help plan the event, send an email to the same address. In-person attendees should be vaccinated, must wear masks, and understand that in-person attendance at an indoor event increases risk of Covid-19 exposure and transmission. Serving food is not currently allowed at in-person events at First Unitarian.



The Bread, Wine, and Book Club will meet on **Friday, December 10 at 7:00 pm**. Everyone is invited to bring a favorite bit of prose or a poem to read aloud. It need not be holiday related. Contact Martha Beyerlein (martha.beyerlein@comcast.net) for more information.

The Monday Afternoon Book Club will not meet in December, but will resume in January. Contact Joyce Etheridge at 509-308-5523 for further information.

The Nonfiction Book Group meets every Wednesday at 2:00 pm in the Arnold Room. Contact Bob Wood (roberttwood@gmail.com) for more information.

Would you like to donate our Sunday flowers? It is a meaningful way to celebrate an anniversary or birthday, or to remember a loved one. Dates are still available for December and January. Arrangements can be simple, and creativity is encouraged! Please contact Sara Friederich at saradell@comcast.net to reserve a date.



First Unitarian
A Unitarian Universalist Congregation
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
- DATED MATERIAL -

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

Now Hiring! Zoom DJ

First Unitarian seeks a part-time Zoom DJ to run our online services. This position requires experience and training specific to hosting meetings on Zoom. The Zoom DJ will work closely with the Worship Team to create high-quality online worship. The church shifted to online worship in March of 2020 and plans on continuing online worship for the foreseeable future. The Zoom DJ will be augmenting a team of trained volunteers, so an intermittent schedule is possible. Remote workers are very welcome! To read more about this position, including the job requirements and application process, visit our website:

<https://uuabq.org/now-hiring-2/>