



THE MESSENGER

FIRST UNITARIAN

Albuquerque • East Mountains • Socorro

February 2022

This Month's Theological Theme Is Widening the Circle.



Back when I was living in Texas—and a member of the choir at First UU in San Antonio—we hosted the UUA Southern Region meeting, and the music director arranged for the choir to perform for the “opening ceremonies.” She chose an old Mark Miller hymn for us to sing, the lyrics of which

have always stuck with me:

Draw the circle, draw the circle wide.

Draw the circle, draw the circle wide.

No one stands alone; we stand side by side.

Draw the circle, draw the circle wide.

As a progressive faith tradition that has prided itself on being a voice and a champion for social justice and inclusion within our congregations, we are reminded that there is never a “mission accomplished” to our work. We are always invited to stop, step back, and take stock of the work that we are doing, asking ourselves: “Are we doing what we originally committed ourselves to do? Is there a way we could be doing it better?” The third line of the song especially stands out to me. It serves as a reminder of the Universalist part of our church’s name; Universalism teaches that not one of us is “free” unless we all have the same opportunity to realize that freedom.

The prospect of our congregation spending an entire year focusing on one particular study item—and how that affects every aspect of the church and the work that it does—can seem daunting. It can also

seem like a point of frustration—why must we spend so much time on something that surely everyone already agrees on? For me, it is less about the work itself than what doing the work has the potential to mean for us.

The average UU congregation has between 50 and 150 members. Yet, First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque has grown from a group of a few free-thinking individuals who placed an ad in the newspaper in 1949 to a multi-campus congregation with over 750 members. It has grown so much because of what its existence and its presence means to us, and to the Albuquerque community. People have invested their time and talents—as well as their financial contributions—because they deeply love this community, and they want to share it with others. When something is that much of a labor of love, the work that goes into it is sometimes destined to be hard. But because of what it means to us—and what it can mean to others—we find it in ourselves to do the work.

“No one stands alone; we stand side by side.” This is what widening the circle means to me and why it is so important. How do we grow and expand ourselves so that we are all truly standing side by side? The answer to that question will take time and work to find, and I look forward to joining you along the way.

Matt Pargeter-Villarreal, Intern Minister

Minister News

From January 31 through February 4, our ministers will attend the UU Ministers Association’s Center Institute, a continuing education gathering taking place in San Diego and virtually. In addition to lectures by UU scholars, Angela will attend a seminar on “Sustainable Leadership in Emergent Times” while Bob attends one on Climate Change. Later in the month, Angela will attend the annual gathering of SMOLUUC (the Senior Ministers of Large UU Congregations) for specialized collaboration and learning.

Worship Calendar for February

Virtual Worship: Sundays at 9:00 am

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

In-Person Worship: Sundays at 11:00 am

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.](#)

February 6

“The Next Generation”

Matt Pargeter-Villarreal, Intern Minister

Join Matt for a reflection on his time in youth and young adult ministry—and how young people have a lot to show us about moving our denomination forward in the name of inclusivity and social justice into the years to come.

Music: Becky O’Boyle, viola. Susan Peck, piano. Henry Eccles, Sonata #11 in G minor

February 13

“Widening the Circle”

The Rev. Angela Herrera

A sermon about UU theologies of diversity and inclusion, and brave work happening at the national level in our denomination

February 20

“How the Circle Widens: One Woman’s Journey”

Fr. Anne Topeano Pulpit Guest

Father Anne was ordained on October 16, 2021 in Albuquerque with the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests. She is committed to seeing women welcomed into the Roman Catholic priesthood within her lifetime. While many have understandably walked away from the Roman Catholic Church, she chooses to obey the Holy Spirit’s call to collaborate with God in bringing about gender equality in one of the most powerful institutions in the world.

Music: Jazz Brasileiro, bossa nova duo

February 27

“The Meaning of Love”

The Rev. Bob LaVallee

Thich Nhat Hanh died this past January. We remember his extraordinary grace and conviction and reflect on his teachings.

We Light a Candle

We grieve the death of former church members Alice Demi, who has died in Colorado, and Judy McDowell, who has died in Washington state.

We mourn the death of church member David Manning, and hold his wife Sarah in our loving care.

We honor the memories of church member Dorothy Reynolds, who died last May, and long-time friend Katherine Tyner, who died last July.

We mourn with Bonne Cleveland, whose father died on Christmas Eve.

We hold Michelle Ellis in our hearts as she grieves the death of her husband last month.

We hold Michelle Bloodworth and her family in our care as they grieve the sudden death of her nephew.

We light a candle for Patricia Milner’s dear friend of 25 years, Jack Cassedy, who has died.

We send healing thoughts to Shirley Daney, who is recovering from a broken hip.

We hold Ron Friederich and his family in our hearts as his brother, Gary, continues to recover from COVID.

We rejoice with Sara Wofford as she recovers from gender affirming surgery, and pray for quick healing.

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

Grief Support Group

Many in our congregation are grieving the deaths of beloved spouses, partners, family members, or friends. Pandemic isolation has made it much harder for us to comfort one another. Our First Unitarian Care Team will offer a six-week **Grief Support Group starting on March 1 from 6:00 - 7:30 pm on Tuesdays**. If congregational policies allow, we will gather in person. If not, we will use Zoom.

The group provides a supportive environment for anyone experiencing personal grief. Facilitated sessions offer companionship, support, information, and activities to assist with your unique grief journey. Experience tells us that you are best served by this opportunity 6 - 36 months after the death. If you think you will benefit from this kind of support, please consider registering for the spring session by emailing Caring@uuabq.org, or by leaving a message in the church office at (505) 884-1801. We will want your name, phone, and email contact information at the time you sign up.

Community News

Staff Update

We are very pleased to announce that **our new Director of Operations, Charles England**, started working in the office in early January! Charles has spent 25 years working with Tribal Governments in areas of governance, policy development, budgeting, master land use planning, housing development, and employee management. He has worked with Pueblos and Tribes in New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Charles graduated from the Fort Lewis College with a BA and attended the University of Arizona for graduate studies in Political Science and Federal Indian Law. Charles loves reading, cooking, and being in the outdoors. You can contact him in the church office at (505) 884-1801 or at cengland@uuabq.org. Please join us in extending a warm First Unitarian welcome to Charles as he fills this important role in our church staff and community!



Membership Report

Each year, the Unitarian Universalist Association requires a certification of our membership and contributing friends. First Unitarian updates our membership records before our Annual Meeting each January. A member is someone who has signed the membership book (or an approved proxy) and has made an identifiable financial contribution during the previous year. A contributing friend is someone who has not officially joined the church but has made regular contributions during the previous year. Before the Annual Meeting, the directors of membership and finance reach out to those who have not been contributing to determine whether they intend to retain their membership with the church. Following this year's outreach, our current membership numbers are as follows:

Active Members: 762 people

- New Members in 2021: 32 people
- Lost Members in 2021: 122 people
- Deceased: 9
- Resigned: 22
- Inactive: 91

Contributing Friends: 118 people

While a significant drop in our membership numbers can be disheartening, it is also not unexpected considering the times we are living in, and follows trends seen in many UU churches across the country. If you have questions or concerns about our membership statistics, please contact Laura at LMags@uuabq.org.

Membership Milestones

Happy Membership Anniversary in February!

One Year

- Annabella Flores
- Annette & Jay Forrest
- Tristan Forrest
- Elly Van Mil

Five Years

- Lynn Adkins
- Dale & Robin Asbury Cutler
- Jack & Laurel Babcock
- Randy Brost & Ellen Soisson
- Martha Finical
- Diane Harmon
- Charles Kolberg & Cres Stonacek
- Joyce Kolberg & Charles Moyers
- Marci Laurel
- Stacy Sacco & Dorothy Stermer
- Elaine Stevens
- Debbie Sue

Fifteen Years

- Carole & Ray Bonda
- Karen Carlson
- Jeff & Megan Fleming
- Laura Metzler
- Mikaela Renz-Whitmore
- Diane Ross

Twenty Years

- Martha Anderson
- Donna Collins

Ready to Join?

Our next New Member Joining Ceremony is **Sunday, February 6 at 12:15 pm in Memorial Hall**. To join, you must be at least 14 years old, in agreement with our Mission Covenant, and have made an identifiable financial contribution to the church. Joining ceremonies are on the first Sunday of each month. You can RSVP for the ceremony by filling out a Ready to Join form on our website (<https://uuabq.org/becoming-a-member/ready-to-join-form/>) or by visiting the Membership Table after in-person worship on Sundays. Any questions? Contact Laura Magnusson at LMags@uuuabq.org.

Community News

Journey of Membership Coalition

Church membership is a journey that starts with visiting the church, progressing to attending regularly, then to becoming involved with a group or activity, and possibly moving into a leadership role in a committee or group. We are working to make that journey easier to navigate. There are several teams in our church who are involved in this effort, and we—with the approval of the board—have created a J(ourney) of M(embership) Coalition that meets monthly to share ideas and keep each other informed about our efforts. The coalition meets with our Director of Membership, Laura Magnusson, and is made up of the coordinators and chairs of the:

- Membership Committee
- Welcome Table
- Welcoming Conversations Team
- Connections Table
- Hospitality and Inclusion (Hi!) Team
- Leadership Succession Committee
- Adult Religious Education Council

All of these groups are connected in the work of welcoming and including those new to the church, and doing all we can to help their personal journey at First Unitarian be one of purpose and fulfillment. If you would like to help one of these groups with that effort, contact Laura (LMags@uuabq.org) and she can connect you!

2021 Financial Update

Our financial position continued to improve in December. We received a very large amount of contributions at the end of the year, which has gotten us closer to our revenue budget for 2021. Thank you for your contributions! With year-to-date expenses less than budgeted, we have ended the year well within our operating budget. If you would like to see the full financial results for 2021 and/or the budget for 2022, they will be published in our [Annual Report](#). If you have financial questions, please contact our Director of Finance, Phillip Robinson at accountant@uuabq.org.

Board of Directors Update

I am at my worst when things feel in limbo, and I don't think I'm alone in this. Looking around, I see people struggling with the effects of prolonged uncertainty and being on high alert. As of this writing, I am anxious about the upcoming Annual Meeting. I am hopeful that the congregation will adopt the Strategic Plan, the operating budget, and the slate of new leaders for our Standing Committees. I am finding it hard to feel optimistic about a new year—2021 made hope seem quaint, if not naïve.

But I am looking forward to digging in, growing new roots, branching out. (Where, oh where, is spring?) We have work to do, you and I. The Strategic Plan calls for a year of focused learning and action on anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism—making space for multiple cultures in our church, and learning (again, always) how to lead with love. And, as important as that work is, I am reminded that moving at “the speed of church” (as a Board president of another large UU church said recently) is going to be vital.

We will prioritize this work for a year and dedicate our energies to this focus. But, we must also remember that our energies are not what they once were. Frustrations are high; resilience and patience are stretched thin. Even in this, perhaps especially in this, we must remember the fractal nature of faith formation. We are building our strength when we feel angry or impatient, and finding—by calling on them (again, always)—grace and compassion. We are building our faith when we feel distrustful and frustrated, but show, instead, curiosity and empathy.

Together, our church is strong—deep and wide. Individually, I'd ask all of us to have faith, to remember that we are each doing our best. There is always more to do. And do better. We, as a church, strive for service, to each other and to our wider community. But we must also celebrate and love what is. What is here. Now. And sometimes what is here is brittle and thin and stretched and barely enough. This is how I feel. This is how I've heard our church staff feels. And our ministers. And our church leaders. And our members. Maybe even you. Maybe especially you.

How wonderful, then, that we are a church of “and.” We can want and expect more and better AND be compassionate and loving in our recognition that barely enough is enough for now. We can remember the sacred nature of rest and restoration, of spelling each other, of taking turns stepping up. We can rest in the faith that intention and every next step will take us closer to where we want to be. Together.

Mikaela Renz-Whitmore, President

Religious Education



From Our Director of Religious Education



***“Diversity is being invited to the party;
inclusion is being asked to dance.”
-Vernā Myers***

Greetings!

This year, our monthly themes have invited us to think about not only what values our UU faith calls us to, but also the actions and skills that our times require of us. Pandemic time, along with our racial, political and environmental challenges, exposes the need for humanity to change and adjust in fundamental ways. Every month we have explored a different skill that we need to lean into so that we don't just return to normal after the pandemic is over, but actually bring about a new normal.

This month we will explore the ways in which our times call us to “Widen the Circle.” Every week, families will receive a story that embodies the theme of the week, along with wondering questions and an activity to do together. In the coming weeks, we will explore the Way We Accept Ourselves, the Love We Share, the History We Tell, and the Principles We Live By.

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

Our Current Programming for Children

As we write, our children's program of play has been paused for two weeks due to the rise of Omicron in our state. We hope we will be able to resume in February, and the best way to monitor that is through our Broadsheet and First U Families Facebook page.

Our children need time to play. (So do we!) 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.

In the case of inclement weather, we will offer our chapel and entry hallways as a place for indoor activities such as art and block play. When we have more volunteers, we can expand into other rooms—for instance, block play in a separate room.

If you want to be a part of our RE community, please

consider volunteering for a session of play! We are not yet asking for volunteer teachers. Sign up here:

<https://tinyurl.com/2022REvolunteer>

At home, parents have been responsible for the Religious Education of their children. Noting that families are not returning in large numbers yet, Mia is creating weekly posts and emails featuring a recorded storybook on the theme, questions to ponder together, and an activity to do with children.

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. It's free and you'll remain on our email list, which we use to communicate the most up to date information about classes,

holidays, and events. You also get access to our exclusive Facebook page, a special birthday gift from us, and more!

[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 ensuring your contact information is up to date!



Youth News



The theme for February, “Widening the Circle,” reminds me of one of the most popular covenant agreements in youth spaces—“Croissants, not donuts (with the exception of snack).” The youth added that last part, I just was

in enthusiastic agreement. This means we keep our circle open, like a croissant, inviting, welcoming. No one should feel as if they're left on the outside, with no way to come in. WE encourage each other to draw our circle wide.

Widening the way we accept ourselves, the love we share, the history we tell, and the circle of patriotism are all ways in which the times we live in call us to widen the circle, and in turn, widen and enrich us all. In addition, we will spend time with the viral video by Kimberly Jones, “How Can We Win,” and allow it to pull and push us through our feelings about current events, and our understanding of the toll of racism.

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!

[Meeting ID: 842 4289 2753/Passcode: 041625](#)

Our February theme is “Widening the Circle.”

February 6: Adapting to Change.

Widening the Circle includes engaging with perspectives, cultures, philosophies, and the people who express them. What is your response when these different ways of being confront you? Albert Einstein wrote: “Our task must be to free ourselves ... by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.” We will consider excerpts of Einstein’s writings on this topic.

Angela Merkert, facilitator.

February 13: Affirming Differences.

Desmond Tutu said, “Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another.” What is required of us to practice this realization? How does Unitarian Universalism support our practice?

Angela Merkert, facilitator.

February 20: Living in Community; Defining Our Communities.

Parker Palmer says that “In a true community we will not choose our companions, ...our companions will be given to us by grace.” How wide is the circle of your community and how has it widened and/or narrowed over the years? Let’s consider the social influences that influenced your selection of community(ies) to engage.

Angela Merkert, facilitator.

February 27: “Keep Sharp: Build a Better Brain at Any Age.”

This book by Sanjay Gupta, MD, a neurosurgeon and commentator on CNN, will be our excellent book for the next series of classes. “Whether you’re concerned about memory loss or want to boost your mental acuity, this book presents the latest science in accessible language.”

Ron Friederich, MD, facilitator.

Music Notes from Susan Peck



We enter February with renewed hopes of musically “widening the circle.” Sol Singers are now meeting three times a week in smaller groups: Mondays on Zoom, Wednesdays 12:00 - 2:00 pm during food bank hours in the courtyard, and Sundays after worship, also in the courtyard. Singing outside is still the safest way to create harmony in person. All are welcome to join the song circles.

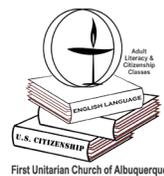
We have exciting guest musicians coming up. On Feb 20, Jazz Brasileiro brings bossa nova sounds to our service. “The collaboration between guitarist Tony Cesarano and vocalist Debo Orlofsky highlights exquisite guitar lines and gorgeously haunting melodies sung in Portuguese and English.”

Earth Web’s Green Corner

In the UU Ministry For Earth course a few years ago, participants learned that First Unitarian impacts climate change largely through transportation. Now, Earth Web is taking on transportation with renewed energy. We will explore ways to improve bus service to be more inviting and inclusive, as well as other ways to tread lightly on the earth. Please sign up on our Google form: <https://forms.gle/c1uSvRWcM3xbptL27> and help us figure out how!

In addition, this Spring, Earth Web is promoting earth-friendly legislation, reading Laura Paskus’ book *At the Precipice*, preparing for the Sustainability Fair, and living into our newly minted First Unitarian Strategic Plan. We welcome any and all to work and play with us! Please contact Marilyn O’Boyle at marilynlea@aol.com.

ESL & Citizenship Classes Postponed



First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque

Literacy and citizenship in-person classes are again postponed until the COVID pandemic has decreased to a point when we can meet safely. We hope to resume in late February or March but we are not sure of dates yet. Please contact Connie Molecke at conniemolecke@gmail.com

if you are interested in volunteering to help with citizenship applications or in teaching online.

Groups & Activities

Wisdom Circle: What Feeds Your Soul

Saturday, February 19, 10:00 am - noon

With Omicron still out there, in February we'll be gathering around our virtual table again, this time to talk about what feeds our souls. All are welcome. Please reflect on what most sustains you and provides meaning to your life. What do you find naturally pleasurable? What brings insight? What strengthens your spirit? What keeps you going? Contact Jerilyn at jbowen1@unm.edu.

Meeting ID: 962 2094 2211

Password: 485006

CUUPS This Month

Join Coyote Willow CUUPS for our **virtual Imbolc ritual on Saturday, February 5 at 7:00 pm**. Imbolc marks the mid-point between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox; the days are lengthening and the first signs of spring are showing. This is a time for clearing out the old and welcoming the new. Imbolc is also traditionally the celebration of the Goddess Brigid, a Celtic goddess of healing, poetry, and smithcraft, associated with fire, the Sun, and the hearth. In our ritual, we will create a Brigid's cross as a focus for our wishes for what we want to manifest for Spring. Please have with you for the ritual: a chalice or candle, a blank piece of paper, something to write with, and something to enjoy for "cakes and ale."



Coyote Willow CUUPS holds its **Planning and Social Circle on the 2nd Friday of each month at 7:00 pm**.

Due to the ongoing social distancing requirements, we are again meeting in the virtual world for this event. On **February 11**, we will mainly be discussing our upcoming events. 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 bboydbabe@gmail.com for the Zoom meeting information.



MONTHLY READS

The Bread, Wine, and Book Club will meet on **Friday, February 11 at 7:00 pm**. Our book will be [*Fake Accounts by Lauren Oylar*](#). Contact Martha Beyerlein (martha.beyerlein@comcast.net) for more information.

The Monday Afternoon Book Club will meet **Monday, February 21** at 1:30 pm on Zoom. The book is [*The Housekeeper & the Professor by Yoko Ogawa*](#). 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. This month they are discussing [*The Icepick Surgeon by Sam Kean*](#). Contact Bob Wood (roberttwood@gmail.com) for more information.

The Readings on Racism Group meets the last Wednesday of each month at 3:30 pm. Contact Elly Van Mil (emvmil@yahoo.com) to be added to their email list.

Want to See Your Group Listed Here?

All you have to do is ask! Our Director of Membership & Communications, Laira Magnusson, is here to help! Please go to this page on our website—
<https://uuabq.org/publicity-church-committees-groups/>
to read about how to publicize your group or events, then send her a message with what you need at LMags@uuabq.org.



First Unitarian
A Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Albuquerque • East Mountains • Socorro
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Albuquerque, NM 87110

www.uuabq.org 505-884-1801

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

3:00 PM

Epiphany Episcopal
Church, 908 Leroy Place