November 2026
Worship Theme
Accountability

"Do the right thing. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest."
~Mark Twain

Accountability is a willingness to accept responsibility, generally considered an admirable quality and a mark of being trustworthy and responsible. Accountability is also difficult, so it can have negative associations of duty, obligation, and discipline. However it speaks to us, Unitarian Universalism invites us to consider some other perspectives.

Simply put, accountability can be a reminder of something you say you will do. One everyday example is forming an exercise group for support towards a goal of becoming a healthier person. As a part of a group, you feel a sense of responsibility to others beyond yourself so you show up consistently even on the days when you are tired or grouchy. In turn, the members of the group hold each other accountable by reminding and celebrating each other on the shared journey. Let's consider extending this example to our spiritual and religious lives.

Here at UUAC, we have a community where we come to practice being the people we want to be, as Rev Nathan often reminds us. We do not have fixed creeds or dogma in Unitarian Universalism. We honor community covenants, promises to each other on how to live out our shared principles and values. We hold each other accountable by reminding and supporting each other in doing that within and beyond our walls.

This type of accountability is needed to create a just world. The UUA 8th Principle challenges White UUs to hold themselves accountable to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Restorative justice emphasizes the practices of healing and repairing relationships rather than punishment of those who caused harm. Our recognition of the "interdependent web" calls us to be accountable to future generations and our earthly home. This work is demanding and difficult. Together, we can make progress on this journey.

Questions for discussion and discernment on your own, or with each other:

What values and practices do you associate with accountability?

What was your model for accountability?

What happens if there is no accountability to yourself or others?

How do you hold yourself accountable?

Who do you think of as an example of accountability? Who is not?

What goal would you like to work towards? How would you like others to hold you accountable for doing the work toward that goal?

This month's theme was composed by Aimee Dalrymple and the Worship Associates.

Activities for Families:

Model how to "own" your mistakes and accept responsibility by narrating and discussing your actions. Phrases to consider are "my bad," "my fault", and "I'm sorry."
From: 5 Ways to Teach Your Kids to Own Their Mistakes, Parents.com
https://www.parents.com/teach-kids-to-own-their-mistakes-11934976

Quotes to Consider:

Louise Smith-Erb, our Ministerial Intern, preached on this topic on Oct 11, 2026 (recording available on UUAC website) :

> "Universalism means we are all accountable,
> in this clear and immediate present,
> accountable to leading lives of integrity,
> lives fully bound up with our neighbors,
> all of our neighbors, all of our elders and all of our children,
> past and present,
> far and wide.
>
> Our faith too bestows upon us many responsibilities : the responsibility to stay by each other's sides, even in our failings.
> The responsibility to work for repair in whatever corner of the world we best can.
> The responsibility to know ourselves,
> to know when we have not lived up to the ideals of our values,
> to love ourselves through the disappointment and to keep going."

"Our main obligation is accountability. Whether that looks like something that many people do not want to hear, or something that many people do want to hear, it's our obligation to report on it." ~ Sophia Dasser, editor of *The Cornell Daily Sun*

"It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable." ~ Moliere

"A body of men holding themselves accountable to nobody ought not to be trusted by anybody."
~ Thomas Paine

"The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be."
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Ninety-nine percent of all failures come from people who have a habit of making excuses."
~ George Washington Carver

"Forgiveness and compassion are always linked: how do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?" ~ bell hooks

For more on this month's theme go to: http://uuac.org/worship/themes-for-spiritual-practice/

The Worship Associates are: Carly Baker Bettencourt, Alan Cantor, Aimee Dalrymple, Katherine McHugh, Kirstin Sokol (chair), Susannah Wolfskill, and Adam Yannapoulos.

"I Go Down to the Shore" by Mary Oliver:

I go down to the shore in the morning

and depending on the hour the waves

are rolling in or moving out,

and I say, oh, I am miserable,

what shall—

what should I do? And the sea says

in its lovely voice:

Excuse me, I have work to do.

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