Not for Ourselves Alone: Building an Inclusive Future

First Universalist Church Capital Campaign

GRACE ZIMMER

"Hello my name is Grace Zimmer and I am a junior in high school. I am actively involved in teaching religious education to the fourth grade class during the first service and I also actively participate and attend the youth class; which consists of tenth through twelfth graders. I have been attending First Universalist since before I was born and had no idea how much of an impact it would have on my life. Our church and the congregation have been here for me through every aspect of my life, from times when I did not want to get out of bed, to times of great celebration over my friends and my successes. First Universalist has been a place of warm, welcoming arms to me and many others who believe in living a life based on love, peace, and service to our selves, our community, and our world.

I have always felt that First Universalist was one of the most welcoming churches I have ever attended. Everyone carries themselves with purpose and a smile. From teaching religious education or participating in the youth class to attending the service, I have always felt at home. My youth group specifically is like a second family to me. Even though we can get a little rowdy, and it isn't always the best timing, it is all because of our love for our not-so-little family. We crave each others company and insightful conversations so when we are finally reunited after a long week without each other, it is difficult to contain our excitement.

Recently I do not think I have ever been so proud to be a Unitarian Universalist and a member of our church. In the past week or so, our church unanimously voted to become/remain a sanctuary church. I had no doubt that our congregation would make the right decision and I wish I could give every member of our church a ginormous hug for doing so. With everything that has happened in the political aspect of our country and everything that continues to happen, it has been more difficult for me and many to focus on positivity or to have pride in our country. Our church has helped to restore my faith in our nation and in humanity. Even by reciting our chalice lighting words every Sunday, I am reminded of what our faith community stands for and how dedicated we are to social justice, racial justice, and service as our law.

When I go off to college in two years, I do not know what I will do without my faith community of First Universalist. Our church has been such a big part of my life and has opened my mind to new ideas and strengthened my values in so many ways I can not begin to name them all. I would like to thank every member of our church for making First Universalist a safe environment for growth, learning, and mindfulness. I do not know what I would be doing right now if it were not for this incredible faith community. Thank you for everything."