

# Annual Report 2022–2023

## Leadership Team Report

In 1977 the poet, Adrienne Rich wrote:

*My heart is moved by all I cannot save  
so much has been destroyed  
I have to cast my lot with those  
who age after age, perversely,  
with no extraordinary power  
reconstitute the world.*

In so many ways, this has been a year of mourning and grief, of naming and noticing all that has been lost—and of somehow, some way, with no extraordinary power, joining with the strength of the past and the hope of the future to reconstitute the world. Like other congregations around the country, we have experienced enormous change over the last three years, and there is no way back to how things were. For some of us this is cause for grief, for some it is cause for hope, and for most of us, it's a bit of both.

What it means to belong, to be connected, to be engaged in a spiritual community (or any community) is in flux. We do life and church differently than we did before the pandemic, and we are in the midst of creating new patterns of meaning and belonging in our congregations. Throughout the last three years, our membership numbers have remained stable, with new members joining focused not on a status in stasis, but deeply invested in covenant and relationship. Monthly community dinners with opportunities for

spiritual growth after the meal were very well attended, focusing on community focused, low-commitment, multigenerational fellowship. We created a predictable rhythm for the program life of the church, with whole-congregation events to reconnect in September and January, and published guides for Fall, Winter-Spring and Summer, with kickoff events and a variety of programs offered in each season. We held an adult spiritual growth retreat in January with approximately 100 in-person and 25 virtual participants. This day-long event brought folks together to focus on thresholds, featured guest speaker Rev. Karen Hering, and included time for reflection, art, journaling, small groups and food.

For the first time since 2019, we celebrated Water Communion in person in our newly renovated sanctuary, and we have gathered in person for worship on Sunday mornings without interruption for the full church year. Amidst the rush in so many areas of society to “go back to normal” as quickly as possible, we listened carefully to those most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and chose to continue to mask in the sanctuary until just recently to protect and include those most at risk. We sang and learned and laughed together on Sunday morning. We welcomed new members, dedicated babies, listened to our youth, rejoiced at weddings and celebrated the lives of those we lost. We focused on communal spiritual practice and congregational singing, and we missed our choir.

Since 2020, we've created virtual spaces for worship, small groups, pastoral care, and connection. This year,



FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF MINNEAPOLIS

# Leadership Team Report (continued)

as we leaned further into what it means to be church in a changed world, an online ministry assessment of the congregation's needs was completed this winter. In the coming year, and with support and involvement of church members, we'll turn those plans into reality. We've begun providing live pastoral support and care during online worship services, held our first ever multiplatform church retreat, many of our small groups have become multiplatform, and we are in the process of offering a multiplatform summer spiritual practice series while also adapting all our events to be as accessible as possible to all potential participants—whether they are joining us in person or online, live or after the fact.

While religious education participation for children and youth has been hard hit nationally, First Universalist is experiencing rising participation in our children, youth, and family ministries. Religious education registration numbers continue to rise, post pandemic, with 410 children and youth enrolled this year. Participation is strongest in the lower grades, and well below historical averages in 7th–12th grades as many youth didn't return to church following the pandemic closure. Still, 18 youth participated in the Coming of Age ceremony (approximately 66% of pre-pandemic number) and the senior high led a Youth Sunday service (approximately 25% of pre-pandemic). Nineteen youth and families participated in 6th grade Rites of Passage, which is comparable to previous years. The young children's childcare rooms, elementary OWL, and 2nd–5th grade had strong attendance. Offering choice rooms/activities to elementary kids has resulted, as hoped, in greater community development, new friendships, the elimination of problematic behavioral issues, and increased excitement and engagement in religious education for this age group.

As a congregation, we are experiencing increased demands with far fewer volunteers. National trends show that regular volunteering in congregations has dropped from 44% of those who attend regularly to 15%, while requests for financial and food assistance, counseling and spiritual guidance have increased significantly. Small groups for caregivers, people experiencing grief, and those in the midst of or who have recently experienced divorce were offered and well-attended. We held space

for Mental Health Sunday, Remembrance Sunday, and our Blue Holidays service. The Minister's Emergency Fund distributed over \$18,000 to church and community members in need of support. For the first time in several years, we welcomed and supported a full-time Cummins Ministerial intern and helped to shape an emerging UU minister.

Financially, it's a mixed picture. Several years of increased giving and government pandemic support have given way to new patterns of giving and participation. Significant conflict over the termination of the Director of Choral Arts this fall led to the departure or decreased participation of some church members, and resulted in a loss in annual giving totalling \$90,000. Like most congregations around the country, we will end this fiscal year with a significant deficit, and we anticipate a significant deficit in the next fiscal year even with decreases in staffing. Meanwhile, we celebrate the fulfillment of our five year goal of donating \$100,000 to BLUU in just four years of holiday giving, and the generosity of so many congregants who raised \$96,000 in our "Close the Gap" effort to help reduce this year's deficit.

We're using our building differently than before, and all of us have a new relationship with technology. We provided a welcoming and affirming space for monthly meetings of Minnesota Transforming Families, 12-Step Spirituality, hosted prom for our faithful action partner Augsburg Fairview Academy, opened our space for elections, and wedding and memorial services. We continue to nurture a strong relationship with our cornerstone tenant, Grace Neighborhood Nursery School, and our sanctuary apartment has been in use throughout the year hosting immigrants in times of transition.

Not surprisingly, research on current thriving congregations shows that optimism and a willingness to change make a big difference. Congregations that are thinking in a new way about their vision and mission, that are willing to embrace change, identifying new ways to innovate and embrace new opportunities for ministry, and believe they will emerge stronger than before are experiencing higher levels of attendance, giving, and a sense of spiritual vitality.

First Universalist's experience reflects these broader

trends and in this time of change and transition we are choosing to listen first. We believe in the wisdom in each of us, and through one-on-one conversation and small groups, church-wide listening sessions this past fall, engagement with the Music Ministries Dream Team, our online engagement assessment, the listening and reflection from the Creating Beloved Community team, our Change team racial justice rubric sessions, and the Board-led process to develop new Visionary Goals, we are listening deeply to each other, and listening for the call of love. We trust that this deep listening is leading to faithful discernment of the direction and structures we need to set in place to help us become the people and the church our faith calls us to be.

Together, we are laying the foundation that can provide guidance on ways of being—on how to live into our faith individually, at church, and in the world, even as the ground continues to shift beneath us. We are learning how to do conflict differently, building internal capacity to support each other here and local congregations in conflict transformation. We are beginning to practice the ways of being that allow for the emergence of Beloved Community, and we are getting serious about joy, singing, and what love looks like in public. We are showing up with and for each other, grounded in a love that will not let any one of us go, as we cast our lots with each other and without any extraordinary power, reconstitute the world.

## 2022–2023 Board of Trustees

**Daryn Woodson** *President*  
**Rebecca Slaby** *Vice President*  
**Matt Keller** *Secretary*  
**Benjamin Miles** *Treasurer*  
**Bryana French**  
**Cathy Geist**  
**Sarah Hedge**  
**Jeff Snyder**  
**Liv Dalby**

## 2022–2023 Ministers & Staff

**Aimee K. Bryant** *Artist in Residence*  
**Rev. Jen Crow** *Senior Minister*  
**Olu Famule** *Assistant Livestream Tech*  
**Liz Farmer** *Membership Coordinator*  
**Rev. Ashley Harness** *Assistant Minister*  
**Hirut Hedge** *Program Assistant*  
**Franco Holder** *Pianist*  
**Rev. Arif Mamdani** *Associate Minister*  
**Emma Paskewitz** *Senior High Coordinator*  
**Jim Poulter** *Facilities & Events Manager*  
**Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout** *Director of Worship Arts Ministries*  
**Brad Schmidt** *Finance Manager*  
**John Steitz** *Sound Engineer*  
**Jenn Stromberg** *Communications Manager*  
**Richard Thomas** *Custodian*  
**Tracy Van Epps** *Facilities Manager*  
**Lauren Wyeth** *Director of Spiritual Growth for All Ages*

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# Board President's Report

By Daryn Woodson



In adrienne maree brown's book, *Emergent Strategy*, adrienne names six elements to Emergent Strategy: Non-Linear & Iterative, Fractal, Adaptive, Resilience & Transformative Justice, Creating More Possibilities, and Interdependence & Decentralization. Since 2020,

church leadership (both ministerial and lay) has uplifted how much our church has been embracing and experiencing the element of Fractal (how we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale) but without a doubt, our 2022–23 church year has been rife with the elements of “Non-Linear & Iterative” (how do I/we learn from this) and “Adaptive” (how we live & grow & stay purposeful in the face of constant change).

First and foremost our church has embraced the elements of “non-linear” & iterative” and “adaptive” through the creation of the Commitment to Beloved Community (CBC) team and the soon to be created Right Relations team. These teams were formulated after our church experienced significant moments of conflict and we found ourselves faced with the questions: how can we learn from this conflict and how can we live, grow, and stay purposeful in the change this conflict has created? The CBC team did an amazing job identifying the behavior that people want to practice, especially in times of conflict, to be a healthy, beloved community. These behaviors have been shared in the *Liberal* and I look forward to experiencing all the ways we will be reminded of them in the time to come. The soon-to-be Right Relations team will focus on helping each of us to be called in whenever we find our behaviors, especially in moments of conflict, are not aligned with the behaviors we named we want to practice.

Secondly our church experienced the elements of “non-linear & iterative” and “adaptive” through our visionary goals process. The process pushed participants to name and envision how our church could live, grow, and be purposeful not just in this current juncture but also in the near future in ways that could enrich the lives of those who hold identities that are marginalized, which in return will enrich the current lives (human

and non-human) now and in the generations to come. Unfortunately we fell short of the minimum amount of participants needed to finish the visionary goals process. Still we did learn that being a Unitarian Universalist is more than the words and pictures on paper; it is about how we aspire to embody our faith through actions.

The Change Team continues to be a beacon for us to reflect on how well we are practicing being a racially just congregation and live into the elements of “non-linear & iterative” and “adaptive.” In Fall 2022, the Change Team, with its defined charge, did a wonderful job using the Racial Justice Rubric to identify where we are as a congregation in the areas of all people experiencing sustainable systems that center the liberation and joy of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color persons. The report of their findings was also shared in Fall 2022, and one of their overall insights was, “much of the work before us is about changing culture, which requires more than policies and shifts to practices/behaviors...” These insights support the work that the CBC team has done and the Right Relations team will do, require us congregants to step into the meaningful yet hard work of practicing beloved behaviors as a congregation together and accepting offers to be called into the practice when we find our behaviors are not aligned with our values and faith traditions.

The last but not least soon-to-be formulated team that is aligned with the elements of “non-linear & Iterative” and “adaptive” is the Policy Governance Team. This team will look at how we currently use policy governance, how we can learn from its current use and which iteration of policy governance will allow our congregation to live, grow, and stay purposeful in the constant change required to be a healthy, beloved community.

As I transition off the Board of Trustees at the end of this church year, I am grateful to have been your President as this church both experienced and will continue to experience non-linear, iterative, adaptive, and fractal ways of being. We are paving the way to a healthier, more racially just congregation and I am thankful to be on this pathway with you all.

With deepest gratitude,

**Daryn Woodson**

# Financial Report

By Rev. Jen Crow and Ben Miles, Treasurer



As has been true in most areas of church life at First Universalist and around the country, the financial

life of our congregation continues to be in flux. As nationwide trends indicate, we are on fluid ground. Everything is still up in the air, and there is no going back to how things were. What it means to belong, to be connected, to be engaged in a spiritual community (or any community) is in flux. We do life differently than we did before the pandemic, and we need to create new patterns of meaning and belonging in our congregations. Meanwhile, most people—and especially most long-tenured faith communities—long for a sense of stability and predictability. The statement, “the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior,” is no longer true in congregational life, and perhaps for many of our institutions.

In reviewing our financial situation for this year and next, this is especially true. Predictions and projections made earlier this year, using the same methods we’ve used reliably for many years, are not coming true. Looking back on giving patterns from the past is no longer relevant, and even long-tenured staff are finding it difficult to discern reliable patterns and make relevant predictions. As we approach the end of this fiscal year, here is what we are now projecting:

- A deficit (expenses exceeding income) of roughly \$240,000. This includes the almost \$100,000 of generous additional gifts made to help close our budget gap this year.
- Giving is not coming in at the rate that was expected, in annual giving and in donations. This accounts for the vast majority of the deficit. In Q2 2023, we projected a deficit of \$137,000. Our updated projection is about \$100,000 higher because the tools we used for our projection of giving are no longer relevant. As stated above, we

relied on giving patterns of the past which did not come true this year.

- Earned revenue (rentals, weddings, memorial services) is also projected to come in roughly \$30,000 lower than budgeted.
- Total expenses are tracking roughly \$80,000 higher than budgeted. The largest factors in these increased expenses come from unexpectedly high snow removal, utility, and property tax costs.

In light of the unexpected size of this year’s deficit, we are increasing our efforts to increase one on one conversations with donors to confirm sustaining gifts (monthly automatic payments from a bank account/ credit card), pledges (promises to pay at a later date), and stock and tax-related gifts.

Our current Operating Reserves total \$277,000 and will be used to pay our bills even as we are in deficit spending. This fiscal year will require the use of the vast majority of our Operating Reserves.

It is important to note, we are in the process of applying for the Employee Retention Credit, a program of the CARES Act, which is projected to provide a refund of \$225,000 to us in the upcoming fiscal year. Based on a review by Clergy Financial Resources, the board and staff are confident that we can rely on these funds. Thus, the Board plans to and has approved using this credit to replenish our Operating Reserve to a total of about \$260,000. Also, the Board has a contingency plan to reassess the 2023–24 Operations in the very unlikely event these funds do not materialize.

## 2023–24 Proposed Operating Budget

Our budget is a moral document. It represents the congregation’s commitments to the past, present and future—and how the congregation chooses to use its resources is a powerful tool for living its values in the world.

The biggest driver of our overall income is donations for annual giving. Projecting this number is one of the biggest challenges each year. While we had previously hoped to be able to budget for annual giving income in the neighborhood of \$1.2 million, it now appears more

# Financial Report (continued)

realistic to budget for \$1,050,000 in annual giving. This is true even after devoting more time and energy to this annual giving drive than any in recent years. For example, while it was typical in the past to make 60–100 phone calls to try to close the annual giving campaign, this year lay leaders and staff have made roughly 270 outreach attempts, some more than once, to individuals or families who have given in the past but have not yet committed to giving in the 2023–24 fiscal year. Overall, the expected decreases in giving fall in three primary categories:

- A number of members have significantly decreased or stopped their annual giving commitments to the church, naming their anger and disappointment over the handling of Randy Buikema’s termination and/or uncertainty about the direction of the church. These decreases total roughly \$90,000.
- Quiet quitting; as in other areas of our society, people have quietly pulled back from engagement at church over the course of the pandemic and have not yet returned.
- A number of our regular \$100/month givers have reduced their annual giving commitments, citing inflation and pressures on their household budgets.

With significantly reduced income in the upcoming operating budget, the Board directed the Senior Minister to present a budget that:

- Sets annual giving income at \$1,050,000.
- Increases income in fundraising and special offerings (year-end appeal).
- Increases income in program donations —to reflect new effort to let folks know what different programs cost, including religious education and adult faith formation, and invite them to give at that level when they participate in programming.
- Maintains our current contribution to the UUA Annual Fund.
- Includes funding for Hope for Us conflict transformation consulting from the UUA.
- Maintains staffing and funding for religious education, worship, finance, membership, online

engagement, and adult faith formation. These are all essential areas to fulfill our mission and are key points of connection and engagement for the largest number of congregants.

- Includes staffing reductions
- For remaining staff, benefits and salaries will continue at the current level
- Plans for up to a \$100,000 deficit, contingent upon receipt of the Employee Retention Credit (ERC).

Lastly, there is disappointment from the Board and staff that the proposed budget includes staffing reductions. The Board feels that the events of the past three years, within the church and outside, have required heavy emotional investment as well as extra time to the church by the staff. Staff have also had to learn new skills as a result of the pandemic and shifts in church life. We’re grateful for the investment that all staff have made in First Universlist this year and every year.

We are heartened to report that the Board is considering reconstituting a Finance Committee beginning in July of 2023, and that a team of congregants has been working with staff to plan for the funding of the Building and Capital Reserve, which will support the long and short-term financial needs of maintaining and improving the building in the years ahead.

# Proposed 2022–2023 Operating Budget

	2022-2023 Operating Budget	2022-2023 Year-End Projections	2023-2024 Proposed Budget
<b>Revenues</b>			
<b>Support</b>			
Annual Giving	\$ 1,282,500.00	\$ 1,109,842.64	\$ 1,049,750.00
Donations/Fundraising	\$ 230,800.00	\$ 176,972.14	\$ 293,750.00
Building/Capital Fund	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 155,500.00
Revenue Released from Restriction	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 110,375.06	\$ -
<b>Total Support</b>	<b>\$ 1,555,300.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,397,189.84</b>	<b>\$ 1,499,000.00</b>
<b>Earned Revenue</b>			
Service/Rental Income	\$ 117,000.00	\$ 86,584.38	\$ 103,000.00
Investment Income	\$ -	\$ 0.39	\$ -
Other Income	\$ 11,500.00	\$ 4,281.71	\$ 11,000.00
<b>Total Earned Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 128,500.00</b>	<b>\$ 90,866.48</b>	<b>\$ 114,000.00</b>
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 1,683,800.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,488,056.32</b>	<b>\$ 1,613,000.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$ 1,316,730.00	\$ 1,321,568.79	\$ 1,205,500.00
Administrative Expenses	\$ 128,696.77	\$ 151,187.52	\$ 145,600.00
Program Expenses	\$ 84,500.00	\$ 54,788.24	\$ 84,500.00
Building & Grounds	\$ 123,350.00	\$ 148,869.56	\$ 139,300.00
Construction Loan	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 133,000.00
Other Expenses	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 62,572.66	\$ 5,000.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,658,276.77</b>	<b>\$ 1,738,986.77</b>	<b>\$ 1,712,900.00</b>
<b>Investment Activity</b>			
Realized Losses	\$ -	\$ (291.46)	\$ -
Unrealized Losses	\$ (22,500.00)	\$ (906.67)	\$ -
Dividends & Interest	\$ -	\$ 1,677.39	\$ -
Unrealized Gains	\$ -	\$ 10,766.30	\$ -
<b>Total Investment Activity</b>	<b>\$ (22,500.00)</b>	<b>\$ 11,245.56</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>\$ 3,023.23</b>	<b>\$ (239,684.89)</b>	<b>\$ (99,900.00)</b>

# Statement of Financial Position

Actual  
As of  
03/31/2023

## Assets

### Current Assets

Cash	\$16,472.63
Investments	\$3,550,418.67
Accounts Receivable	\$8,225.80
Other Current Assets	\$51,549.45

**Total Current Assets** \$3,626,666.55

### Non-Current Assets

Fixed Assets	\$5,522,456.47
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**Total Non- Current Assets** \$5,522,456.47

**Total Assets** \$9,149,123.02

## Liabilities and Fund Balance

### Liabilities

#### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$56,991.36
Benefits Payable	\$56,143.98
Other Current Liabilities	\$17,846.94

**Total Current Liabilities** \$130,982.28

#### Long Term Liabilities

Loan Payable	\$1,606,994.59
Interfund Transfer	\$0.00

**Total Long Term Liabilities** \$1,606,994.59

**Total Liabilities** \$1,737,976.87

### Fund Balance

**Unrestricted Net Assets** \$5,701,968.42

**Donor Restricted Net Assets** \$1,709,177.73

**Total Fund Balance** \$7,411,146.15

**Total Liabilities and Fund Balance** \$9,149,123.02

# Foundation Report

By Isabel Quast, Chair

The First Universalist Foundation Board was endowed with the money received from the sale of Unity Settlement House, which held programs dating back to 1901. It provided social services for immigrant families including nursery school, vocational training, and many programs for girls and boys. The Foundation strives to continue serving disenfranchised communities through money grants to provide for social change by supporting emerging leaders, youth, and other communities working on unmet needs.

## Giving Priorities:

1. Demonstrate the potential to address one or more causes of forms of injustice.
2. Work to engage youth, young adults, and/or disenfranchised communities in the work of social change.
3. Have a commitment to measuring the impact or success of the funded program.
4. Focus on the Twin Cities community.
5. Organizations with annual budgets of less than \$1,000,000 will be given greater priority

## 2023 Grant Recipients:

### Minnesota Interfaith Coalition on Immigration (ICOM)

Providing support for immigrants and their families (\$15,000)

### Food for the People

Sourcing CSA boxes from BIPOC farmers and distributing food to BIPOC families (\$10,000)

### Latino Youth Development Collaborative (LYDC)

Supporting Latinx youth leadership and empowerment (\$9,000)

### Our Justice

Assisting those seeking an abortion in navigating healthcare barriers (\$9,000)

### Midwest Food Connection

Support nutrition education to BIPOC communities and youth (\$8,500)

### MN Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA)

Providing outreach/information to the LGBTQ+ community at MN Pride events (\$2,500)

### Mni Ki Wakan

Providing education and research in Indigenous led water innovations and conservation (\$5,000)

### Walk-In Counseling Center

Providing walk-in mental health services to the Twin Cities community (\$5,000)

### River Valley Riders

Providing equestrian therapy to disabled and autistic youth and adults (\$1,000)

### Gender Justice / UnRestrict MN

Seeking to limit the influence of anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers through education and legislative means (\$5,000)

The First Universalist Foundation Board members in 2022–2023 were: Isabel Quast (Chair), Ginny Halloran (Treasurer), Deborah Talen, Bonnie Hill, Kelly Prosen, Gary Melom, Lynn Broaddus (Secretary), Marnie Peichel, and Neela Hammer.

# Recommendations from the Nominating Committee for 2023–2024

**Boldface type indicates those who require a vote by the congregation**

POSITION	NAME	TERM EXPIRES
<b>Board of Trustees</b>		
New trustees ( <i>three-year term unless otherwise noted</i> )	<b>Emily Bijnagte (one-year term)</b>	<b>2024 (first term)</b>
	<b>Marc Gorelick (two-year term)</b>	<b>2025 (first term)</b>
	<b>Ilo Leppik (two-year term)</b>	<b>2025 (first term)</b>
	<b>Lou Quast</b>	<b>2026 (first term)</b>
	<b>Emily Wallace</b>	<b>2026 (first term)</b>
Continuing Trustees	Matt Keller	2024 (first term)
	Cathy Geist	2024 (first term)
	Jeff Snyder	2025 (first term)
	<b>Sarah Hedge</b>	<b>2026 (second term)</b>
	Liv Dalby (youth, one-year term)	2024 (second term)
Officers (one-year term)	<b>Jeff Snyder, President</b>	
	<b>Sarah Hedge, Vice President</b>	
	<b>Matt Keller, Secretary</b>	
	<b>Marc Gorelick, Treasurer</b>	

<b>Foundation Board</b>		
Chair (one-year term)	<b>Isabel Quast</b>	
New Members (three-year term)	<b>Philipp Muessig</b>	<b>2026 (first term)</b>
Continuing Members	Ginny Halloran	2024 (second term)
	Bonita Hill	2024 (first term)
	Isabel Quast	2024 (first term)
	Lynn Broaddus	2025 (first term)
	Gary Melom	2025 (first term)
	Marnie Peichel	2025 (first term)
	Kelly Prosen	2025 (first term)
	<b>Deborah Talen</b>	<b>2026 (second term)</b>

<b>Nominating Committee</b>		
Chair (one-year term)	Ray Dillon (selected by Board of Trustees)	
New Members (three-year term)	<b>David Bach</b>	<b>2026 (first term)</b>
	<b>Sandy Culpepper</b>	<b>2026 (first term)</b>
	<b>Katie Fox</b>	<b>2026 (first term)</b>
Continuing Members	Evelyn Browne	2024 (first term)
	Chad Johnson	2025 (first term)
	<b>Ray Dillon</b>	<b>2026 (second term)</b>

**Delegates to the 2023 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association**  
 Aliana Hermann-Campana, Samantha White, Matt Dalby, Liv Dalby, Rev. Dr. Andrea Johnson, Karen Wills, Meleah Houseknecht, Rev. Jim Foti, Ralph Wyman, and Carol Jackson

# Nominating Committee Recommendations

## *Nominees for Officers of the Board of Trustees*



### **Jeff Snyder, President**

Jeff and his wife Karen's first engagement with Unitarian Universalism came with the encouragement of their teenage son Elliott and led to their joining First Unitarian Universalist of Rochester in 2009. While at First Unitarian Universalist, Jeff was a member of the Finance Committee as well as serving on the Board of Directors as Treasurer. Looking for a change as they started retirement, Jeff and Karen moved to Minneapolis in 2014 and joined First Universalist soon after their arrival. Since becoming a member of First Universalist, Jeff has been member of the Welcome team, the Community Investment Team and is currently a member of the Faithful Action Council and Environmental Justice Teams. Outside of First Universalist, Jeff is a long-time board member of Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance.



### **Sarah Hedge, Vice President**

Sarah has been attending First Universalist since 2002. Over the years, Sarah has been involved in a variety of ways at church: advocating for anti-racist practices with the Change Team, co-facilitating and chaperoning Youth Cultural Exchange, teaching 7th grade Neighboring Faiths, serving as chaperone on the high school Boston Pilgrimage, and many years ago, facilitating the Young Adult Group. Sarah is a special education resource teacher, currently focused on including kindergarteners with a variety of disabilities in mainstream classrooms, at a community school in Minneapolis Public Schools. She continuously strives to bring a lens of equity and access to all she does.



### **Matt Keller, Secretary**

Matt has been attending First Universalist since 2009. Two of his three daughters, Sophie and Tess, attended Religious Education up through the OWL program. Matt has been involved in UU volunteering since joining. He was a Religious Education teacher for five years; helped in strategic planning around the Sunday morning experience; was on Rev. Ruth's advisor group as she readied herself for ministry; and is currently a Care Companion. Matt works in children's publishing and plays trombone in a couple of bands. He loves the mission and activist nature of First Universalist Church and believes that you need to get involved in your own unique way to make a difference for yourself and others.

## *Nominee for Board of Trustees and Officer*



### **Marc Gorelick, Treasurer**

Marc became a UU in the early 1990s, and started coming to First Universalist shortly after moving to Minneapolis in 2017. He is particularly drawn to First Universalist's focus on anti-racism and racial justice. At his previous churches in Wilmington, DE, and Brookfield, WI, he has taught RE, served on ministerial search, bylaws, and auction committees as well as the Board of Trustees including a term as president. A pediatric emergency medicine physician by training, he is currently chief executive officer of Children's Minnesota. When not working, Marc enjoys running, cycling, homebrewing, and playing tuba in the Minnesota Freedom Band.

# Nominating Committee Recommendations

## *Nominees for Board of Trustees*



### **Emily Bijnagte**

Emily and her family became members in June 2019 and have been so thankful to have this foundational community through the pandemic and ever-changing world since then. Emily has dabbled in small groups and events and greeting at church and is excited to become more involved through the Board. Her husband Dylan often greets and her children have done RE and worked at the church and her daughter Elliott (17) is still very active while her son Adriaan (15) is keeping busy with track and cross-country. Emily is a User Experience (UX) professional with over 20 years in the industry building and creating digital experiences for all audiences. She is currently taking a break from full-time employment to focus on her family and to where love is calling her next. She brings her passion for user-centered design to the Board and is excited to learn and support the Board and congregation.



### **Ilo Leppik**

Ilo has been a Unitarian since he met Peggy more than 57 years ago. He joined FUS due to encouragement from his son, David. This has given him the joy of seeing his grandchildren Sylvia and Ian participate in church activities as they were growing up. Ilo enjoys being a greeter on Sundays and getting to know many of the wonderful members of the church in various activities such as Circle Suppers, and at Camp Unistar. He is a neurologist specializing in epilepsy and is a Professor of Pharmacy and Neurology at the University of Minnesota. Past relevant experience includes board membership of both national and local non-profits. He shares: "These are turbulent times for us and we face many challenges. But we have always been in times of change, and survived, and I am optimistic that we will prosper in the future as we make appropriate responses to the issues."



### **Lou Quast**

Lou has been attending First Universalist since about 1995, and came here after a dozen years at First Unitarian Society, where he and his late wife Sharon were married. Lou has two daughters, Isabel and Louisa, both of whom participated in the Religious Education program through high school. Lou has served on a number of committees, and has sung in the choir for more than 20 years. Lou is on the faculty in the College of Education at the U of M. He enjoys bird watching and time with his family up at the lake cabin. He believes deeply in the core principles of Unitarian Universalism, and hopes to contribute to helping the congregation continue to make progress on our important mission in our community and the world.



### **Emily Wallace**

Emily has been a member of First Universalist Church since 2018 after attending for 2 years and realizing that this truly was her spiritual home. She has served on the Racial Justice team, as a greeter and usher (her favorite!), as well as helping out at memorial services whenever she can. Emily's 17 month old daughter often comes to church with her, and she cannot wait for Vivian to be able to experience Religious Education and find lifelong friends at church. Emily is a volunteer with MN350, and is very passionate about environmental justice. She looks forward to listening deeply and serving on the Board of Trustees.

# Nominating Committee Recommendations

## *Nominee for Foundation Board*



### **Philipp Muessig**

Philipp and his wife Laura joined First Universalist in 1990 with their two young children Anna and Will. Philipp was an active RE teacher throughout their childhood. Shepherding youth on a Coming-of-Age trip to Boston was one of many highlights. During the 2000s Philipp helped pilot several First U small groups. Over the past ten years he has led a number of circles for newcomers to the church and for members nearing retirement. Philipp is grateful to have had a long career in sustainable community development: first with Upper Midwest food co-operatives, then with the Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG) in Minneapolis, and finally with the State of Minnesota, where he developed and directed the state's sustainable cities program. Philipp currently serves on the SNG's community development committee and is a founding member of 36th ART, a community group focused on urban enhancements and Lake Street economic development in two south Minneapolis neighborhoods.

## *Nominees for Nominating Committee*



### **David Bach**

David Bach has been a member of First Universalist since the 80s and with his wife, Narissa, raised their two daughters, Averil and Aileen, in this community. He has been active in our music program including playing trumpet in the Universal Jazz Band and pick-up orchestras for choir performances. He served 6 years on the board of trustees, two as its president, and on the capital campaign and the annual pledge committees. He more recently assisted in leading abolition workshops. His professional career, in addition to music, includes extensive experience in nonprofit leadership, management, and fundraising.



### **Sandy Culpepper**

Sandy has been a UU for 22 years. She began attending First Universalist after moving here in 2018 from Dallas, Texas. In both cities she participated in many Soul Matters circles. She is an active member of the AUW and has attended the retreats for the past four years. She is involved in supporting and advocating for reproductive justice, has been a teacher for 36 years, and currently teaches middle school science at Metro Deaf School in St. Paul. She moved to Minneapolis for love and married her childhood friend on April 1, 2019. They have three teenage boys every other week and a menagerie of pets: a parakeet, a ball python, and a bearded dragon, along with the cutest dog in the world. Sandy looks forward to meeting more people and becoming more involved at church.



### **Katie Fox**

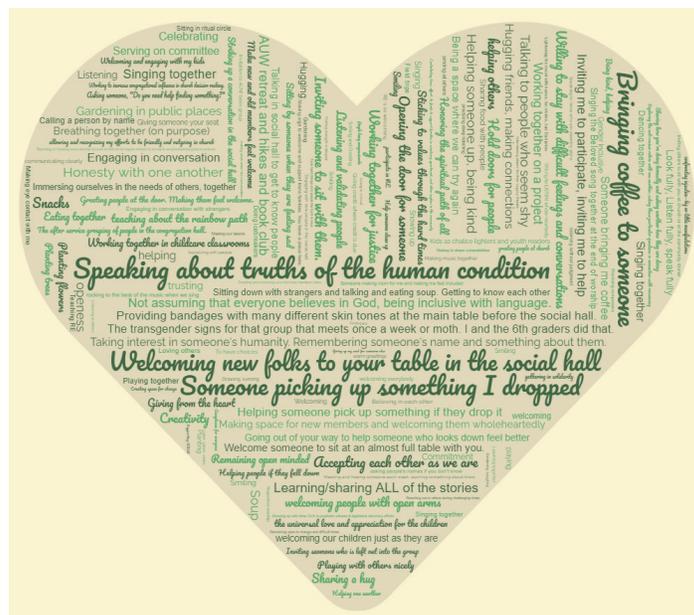
Circle suppers, women's writing groups, and sermon based small groups first drew Katie to First Universalist nearly 15 years ago. Since that time she has hosted suppers, facilitated groups, and this past year co-facilitated 8th grade OWL. Her children, Rita (5) and Cormac (4), have also joined the community. Katie is currently an MPS school social worker and has experience in nonprofit talent acquisition, grants management, and community outreach. Katie looks forward to being part of the messiness, awkwardness, and beauty of regrowing our community after the events of the past three years.

# Commitment to Beloved Community Work

Over the course of this church year, the Commitment to Beloved Community team (Velma Wagner, Janet Merrill, Jennifer Schuster-Jaeger, Rev. Dr. Andrea Johnson, Ginny McAninch, Eric Cooperstein, Rev. Meg Riley, Sarah Hedge, Shelley des Isles) listened deeply to our congregation in multiple formats, and has reflected back to us the behaviors or ways of being that we have experienced here that each of us can practice as we live into our spiritual values. This process of listening deeply and reflecting back the practices of Beloved Community will be an iterative one, one that happens again and again in the life of our congregation. With gratitude for the CBC team's work, we continue our commitment to creating Beloved Community by intentionally practicing these ways of being together at church, that we might transform ourselves, our congregation, and our world.

## At First Universalist Church we create our Beloved Community by...

- Welcoming all people and greeting them with intention, openness, and acceptance;
- Worshiping, singing, and playing together;
- Listening deeply with open minds and hearts;
- Learning from each other's experiences;
- Committing our time and money to the Church and the wider community to achieve together what we cannot do alone;
- Being present for and bringing joy and love to our interactions and relationships;
- Expressing humility about how our own needs relate to those of our community;
- Making space for pain, lament, despair, and hard truths; and
- Staying at the table in times of conflict, seeking and offering forgiveness.



# Membership Engagement Report

By Liz Farmer, Membership & Congregational Connections Coordinator

Membership—both qualitatively and quantitatively—has remained strong at First Universalist. Overall membership numbers remained stable for the fiscal and program year 2022–2023. As of May, 2023, we are 1060 members in total. 44 new members joined — a 4-year high. A quarter of them are under the age of 40.

There are two main reasons why membership numbers could have decreased significantly, but didn't. One: some withdrew their membership and giving in response to congregational conflict this year. Two: during the fiscal years ending in 2020–2022, families experienced financial strains during the Covid pandemic and rapidly rising inflation. During this time, staff and ministers did not make a push for members to declare their membership outright in the flux and uncertainty of those three years. Starting in the winter of 2023, staff have made a concerted effort to refine the accuracy of our giving and membership status data after this phase. This could have meant an overall decline in membership numbers, but they have remained stable.

In Membership classes, new members are joining actively and on purpose. New members are thoughtful and earnest in their reflections, questions, and conversations about what a sustainable, relevant commitment to church membership means to them. Their generous giving reflects their understanding of the importance of stewardship and why they give the amount they do, in a reciprocal relationship of support and transformation over time. They come to church online or in person often and engage in the community regularly. Most importantly, our newest members understand membership not as a status in stasis, but as covenant and relationship.

# Annual Meeting Agenda

164th Annual Meeting of the Members  
First Universalist Church of Minneapolis  
Sunday, June 11, 2023 — Noon

<b>Call to Order</b>	Daryn Woodson, President
<b>Chalice Lighting and Opening Words</b>	Rev. Jen Crow
<b>Appointment of Parliamentarian</b>	Daryn Woodson
<b>Authorization of Board of Trustees to Approve the Minutes of this Meeting</b>	
<b>Senior Minister's Report</b>	Rev. Jen Crow
<b>President's Report</b>	Daryn Woodson
<b>Financial Report &amp; Presentation of Recommended Budget for 2023–24</b>	Ben Miles, Treasurer; Rev. Jen Crow
<b>Consideration and Vote on Annual Budget</b>	
<b>Special Recognition</b>	
• Outgoing Nominating Committee Members	Ray Dillon, Chair
• Outgoing Foundation Directors	Isabel Quast, Chair
• Outgoing Church Trustees	Daryn Woodson, President
<b>Report of the Nominating Committee</b>	Ray Dillon, Chair
<b>Election of:</b>	Trustees, First Universalist Church Officers, First Universalist Church Directors, First Universalist Foundation Members, Nominating Committee Delegates to the 2023 General Assembly of the UUA
<b>Motion to allow Board to appoint additional delegates to General Assembly</b>	
<b>Closing Words</b>	Rev. Jen Crow



First Universalist Church of Minneapolis  
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