

First Universalist Church Board of Trustees
January 18, 2024
Board Packet

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First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Board of Trustees Meeting
January 18, 2024
6:30 - 9:00 pm
First Universalist Church
Cummins Room & [Zoom](#) (multiplatform)

Start	Duration	Topic	Lead
6:30 PM	5	Call to Order	Jeff
		Lighting the Chalice <i>May this flame that burns before us light our way, informed by the wisdom of leaders gone before, and inspired by the trust that we have been given as stewards of this Church. May we have vision, compassion, and courage as we serve this congregation now and for the generations to come.</i>	All
6:35 PM	5	Agenda Approval	Jeff
6:40 PM	20	Executive Session Somatic Grounding Spiritual Community Building	? Jen/Arif
7:00 PM	5	Consent Agenda Approval of November meeting minutes Monitoring: Acceptance of attendance and membership numbers & trends Monitoring: Acceptance of staff and significant volunteer changes	All
7:05 PM	10	Finance Committee Report	Marc
7:15 PM	10	Governance Committee Report	Lou, Sarah
7:25 PM	10	Stewardship Committee Report	Emily
7:35 PM	20	Visionary Goals Update & Plans	Jeff, All
7:55 PM	10	Break	All
8:05 PM	10	Goal for Current Church Year - Agreement and Outlook Make positive progress toward congregational sustainability; economically viable, socially just, ecologically sound, and humane over the long term.	All
8:15 PM	10	Finalize Mid-Year Meeting Agenda	Jeff, All
8:25 PM	15	IDI Follow-up	All
8:40 PM	5	Annual Meeting - Can date be chnged?	All
8:45 PM	10	Gratitudes	All
8:55 PM		Adjourn	All

Roles, responsibilities, and resources for Board Members

JOB DESCRIPTION: First Universalist Board of Trustees

Church Bylaws

Governing Policies Handbook

2023-24 Monitoring Schedule

Senior Minister Board Report
Prepared by Rev. Jen Crow
January 14, 2024

Spiritual Grounding

An excerpt from my sermon on 12/10/23, titled “Standing in the Gap.”

A few weeks ago, our worship associate shared her experience of joining this church and of really investing here...she shared not only the joys of that, but the challenges, too. The experience of not being fully welcomed, of being challenged - of having people ask “who are you and why are you leading this group,” of her persisting but still wondering, is there space here for me to experience that warm welcome and the love that will not let me go that we talk about here in this community.

Ever since we’ve started this series on Beloved Community - I’ve heard something similar from many of you. You’ve told me - I like what you’re preaching and I’m here for that - and it’s not what I experience when I’m here. I’ve been coming for years and no one knows my name. I feel judged by one part of my identity and not embraced for all of who I am. People keep asking me if I’m new. I love what this church stands for and where you all are pointing, but I am not feeling included or welcomed or valued. As a newcomer, as a veteran, as a single person, as a person of color, as someone without children, as an introvert. These comments have made me remember times over the last few years when I’ve heard from some of our folks of color at church that they find it easier to attend services online sometimes because that way they can get the message and the music without experiencing the inevitable microaggressions that happen in this majority white space. It’s feedback that’s come in for well over a hundred years to Unitarian and Universalist and Unitarian Universalist congregations - that our theology is a powerful one, and our practice never fully lives up to it.

This feedback has been weighing heavily on me...And I am so grateful for the vulnerability it takes to share this truth...

Community organizers will tell you that before any change can begin to occur, you have to start by surveying the community. You have to go out and ask people - and really listen to them tell you about what is going wrong in their lives and where they are struggling. You begin with honest, open listening - in a grounded acknowledgement of what is real and true - and often that includes an acknowledgment of our own flaws as individuals and as a community. From there, you hold the tension - acknowledging the world as it is with all of its broken places - while simultaneously holding out a community-created vision of the world as it should be.

I hear this, and I hear again the words of Dr. James Cone, one of the founders of Black Liberation theology, who wrote, “We have a dream that has not been realized. To be sure, we have talked and written about this dream. Indeed, every Sunday morning black people gather in our churches to find out where we are in relation to the actualization of our dream. The Black Church community believes that where there is no vision the people perish. If people have no dreams they will accept the world as it is and will not seek to change it. To dream is to know what is ain’t supposed to be.”

Remembering Cone’s words gives me hope, and it reassures me that even when the way things are isn’t the way they are supposed to be - it does not mean that all is lost. It reminds me that this space between dreams and reality is the exact place where the church belongs. Measuring that gap - finding out where we are in relation to the actualization of our dream - and continuing

to hold that dream out as something to strive for - that is the purpose of church. The purpose of the church is to help us know what the distance is, to know that how things are is not how they are supposed to be, and to be restored and shored up - to experience the transcendent at times, and to be equipped here to help move our shared reality within and beyond the walls of the church closer to how things are supposed to be.

Reflection Questions

- As Board members, you are charged with naming the shared vision of the congregation, holding up our collective dream, and helping us to create and steward our collective resources to move closer to embodying that dream. What gets in your way of this? What inspires you and helps you to be bold? What support would be helpful to you?

Information Items

Request for Ordination

I am delighted to let you know that Jill Braithwaite, a member of First Universalist Church who has recently been approved for preliminary fellowship in the Unitarian Universalist ministry, has requested to be ordained by our congregation. You'll find her letter requesting ordination in this Board packet. In accordance with the bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the power of ordination of ministers is conferred to its congregations. A congregational vote to ordain Jill Braithwaite into the Unitarian Universalist ministry is planned for 1/28/2024, and I request that the Board vote at its January meeting to recommend the ordination to the congregation.

Invitation to attend a workshop with the Rev. Dr. Teresa Cooley
Saturday, February 3rd, 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Unity Church - Unitarian
[Please register by January 29](#)

Rev. Dr. Cooley is the author of the book, *Transforming Conflict: The Blessing of Congregational Turmoil*. This invitation is open to all, and participants will include members and leaders of local Twin Cities congregations, building on our shared work in fostering congregational health and the development of Right Relationship Teams. In this workshop, we'll explore some of the root causes behind conflict, learn about how to create a new culture of learning, explore tools for change, and engage with case studies to help us embody these learnings. After lunch, members of the individual congregations will meet to explore how to take these learnings into their congregations.

Monitoring Items

Attendance and Membership Trends

Please see attached information.

Staff and Volunteer Transitions:

There have been no staff or volunteer transitions this month.

Treatment of Staff - Alignment of Salary Ranges to Job Descriptions

A review of current salaries and how they align with UUA recommendations took place at the Finance Committee meeting on 1/11/24. This review takes into account our geographical location, inflation index, position descriptions, and congregational size. It utilizes the [UUA Salary Program](#) guidelines, which emphasize a clear process and core values, and work to minimize [Unconscious Bias in Compensation](#).

Some highlights to note:

- This year, our geographical index moved from Geo Index 4 to Geo Index 5. These geographical indexes take into account both the cost of wages and the cost of living, and align salary recommendations accordingly. You can learn more [here](#).
- Over the years, we have been working to meet the minimum salary guidelines for each position, regardless of the level of experience or tenure of employees with the congregation. Using this metric, 5 of our 15 employees are being paid at or above the minimum UUA salary recommendations. 4 out of the 5 employees of color in this review are being paid below the minimum UUA salary recommendations.
- The cost to bring all salaries up to the minimum UUA salary recommendations would be \$31,340, which does not include the associated increased costs of benefits.
- As we begin to draft the operating budget for 2024-25, we will include the cost of bringing all positions into alignment with at least the minimum UUA salary recommendations.

Deferred Long-term Compensation

Employees of the church accrue paid time off in several ways, as sick time, vacation time, and personal time. Paid time off balances for all employees are tracked by our Finance Manager, Brad Schmidt, and included on each employee's pay stub. In addition, all letters of agreement with our ministers include this benefit:

Sabbatical time is accrued at the rate of one month per year of service. Sabbatical time may be taken after 3 years of service and accrual shall not exceed 6 months.

As of June 30, 2023, sabbatical balances are:

Rev. Jen Crow, 6 months

Rev. Arif Mamdani, 4 months

Rev. Ashley Harness-Jiminez, 0 months

Rev. Jen will be away for 1 month of sabbatical time in February 2024.

Review Physical Plant for Capital Improvements

Please see the information included in the board packet.

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Board of Trustees Meeting
November 16, 2023
6:30 - 9:00 pm
First Universalist Church
Cummins Room & [Zoom](#) (multiplatform)

Start Duration Topic Lead 6:30 PM 5 Call to Order Jeff

Lighting the Chalice
May this flame that burns before us light our way, informed by the wisdom of leaders gone before, and inspired by the trust that we have been given as stewards of this Church. May we have vision, compassion, and courage as we serve this congregation now and for the generations to come.

Absent: Emily B, student representatives

6:35 PM Agenda Approval Jeff

6:40 PM Executive Session

Somatic Grounding
Spiritual Community Building

6:55 PM Consent Agenda

Approval of October meeting minutes
Monitoring: Acceptance of attendance and membership numbers & trends
Monitoring: Acceptance of staff and significant volunteer changes
Monitoring: Congregant grievances
Monitoring: Staff & Volunteer grievances

Motion was approved to accept the Consent Agenda

Finance Committee Report

Marc discussed Financial Policies. Few standardized policies currently. There will be board policies and there will be governance policies.

Running about \$120K below budget forecasted for year end. Expenses are running at budget. Discussion around having a non church member being on the committee.

7:15 PM 10 Governance Committee Report Lou, Sarah

Reported that there will be a first listening session with one of those who have spoken up about policy governance. There will be 2 more listening sessions scheduled. Read out from these interviews at the next meeting.

7:25 PM 10 Stewardship Committee Report Emily, Emily

Asked for a non board member to be co-chair. Will Hegeman was nominated and motion approved.

The Heritage Circle was discussed. Brad is checking to see if the list of names is up to date and that it would be good if a minister had conversations with them.

Annual giving efforts just being discussed. Can we have 200 conversations? Ideas discussed about how to get people involved.

Also discussed getting RE parents to give. Even if congregants don't have children in RE they may give.

Discussed having a capital ask in the sequence of asking for annual giving.

Could we set up a 503C (non profit) entity to help with corporations that match giving by their employees.

7:35 PM 5 Break

7:40 PM 10 Visionary Goals Update & Plans Jeff, Sarah, Emily

Discussed the feedback session with 6 congregants. Strong voices about the "beige" language used in the goals. Should we open up to more feedback? We need to discern next steps. Can we have goals finalized by the mid year meeting?

Get a meeting to review the feedback from the small group.. Jeff will organize this meeting.

Ideas included: Start the finance, stewardship and governance committees. And, have a sustainable financial model.

7:50 PM 30 Proposed Goals for Year All

Jeff wondered if this is productive time for all to work live or should we come to a meeting with our own thoughts. As well as what each committee sees as their goals with the idea of equity and inclusion.

We could narrow on the 3-5 things to get done this year.

Ideas included: Start the finance, stewardship and governance committees. And, have a sustainable financial model.

Here is the definition of Sustainability that Cathy shared at the meeting—"ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, and humane over the long term"

8:45 PM 5 Key Congregational Dates

- Winter Meeting - 2/11/24 -> 1/28/24? **It was approved to move the meeting to Jan. 28, 2024.**
- Congregational Budget Meeting - 5/09/24
- Annual Meeting 6/09/24

8:20 PM 10 Staff Experience - Introduction & Plan

Jen directed to see what the overall staff experience is at First U. What is working and not working. How are the working conditions etc. A report has been shared with the Exec group of the Board and with staff. Then, have an overall discussion with the board.

We will look at a specific time to review this information.

8:35 PM 10 Staff Grievance Policy Arif

Draft a policy staff can use when there is a grievance with a congregant. There is a review with the staff leadership team and staff will now review. Finalized language ready within a few weeks.

A sexual harassment policy is in existence and will be shared.

8:45 PM 5 Jen's Sabbatical Plans Jen

Jen has accumulated 6 months of sabbatical. Jen would like to take the month of February, 2024 as sabbatical. The motion to give Jen this sabbatical was approved.

8:45 PM 5 First Universalist Website Emily B.

Ashley gave an overview of the project. The plan is to revamp the website starting January, 2024.

8:55 PM 5 Gratitudes

9:00 PM Adjourn

Statistical Report for November 2023

Board Meeting Jan. 18, 2023

MEMBER MEMORIAL SERVICES: 1

Carolyn Young, Nov. 4

MARRIAGES/SERVICES OF COMMITMENT: 0

MEMBERS FOR APPROVAL: 3

Jessica Hoffman

Tanya Lewerenz

Chad Reil

MEMBERS REINSTATED: 0

MEMBERS FOR REMOVAL: 3

Jeannine Barnell

Parvaneh Trobec

Gregory Trobec

CHILDREN DEDICATED: 0

Total members as of the last meeting: 1051

To be added: 3

To be removed: 3

TOTAL MEMBERS: 1051

November Attendance

	2023						2022				
Adults	Sun. 9a Sanctuary	Sun. 10a Sanctuary	Sun. 11a Sanctuary	Sun. 11a Livestream	YouTube Views	Totals	Sun. 9a Sanctuary	Sun. 11a Sanctuary	Sun. 11a Livestream	YouTube Views	Totals
1st week	113		124	34	82	353	132	139	54		325
2nd week	122		134	32	62	318	93	165	47	109	367
3rd week	122		124	35	117	363	122	119	45	119	360
4th week		236		35	107	378	86	85	48	119	290
5th week											
Monthly Total	357	236	382	136	368	1412	433	508	194	347	1342
Average for November	119	236	127	34	123	353	108.25	127	48.5	116	336
RE						9 & 11 RE					9 & 11 RE
1st week						124					226
2nd week						132					197
3rd week						125					146
4th week						25					16
5th week											
Monthly Total						406					585
Average for November						102					146
Combined Average						455					482

Statistical Report for December 2023

Board Meeting Jan. 18, 2024

MEMBER MEMORIAL SERVICES:

Linda McNary, service on Dec. 2

MARRIAGES/SERVICES OF COMMITMENT: 0

MEMBERS FOR APPROVAL: 0

MEMBERS REINSTATED: 0

MEMBERS FOR REMOVAL: 0

CHILDREN DEDICATED: 0

Total members as of the last meeting: 1051

To be added: 0

To be removed: 0

TOTAL MEMBERS: 1051

December Attendance

	2023						2022				
	Sun. 9a Sanctuary	Sun. 10a Sanctuary	Sun. 11a* Sanctuary	Livestream	YouTube Views	Totals	Sun. 9a Sanctuary	Sun. 11a* Sanctuary	Livestream	YouTube Views	Totals
1st week	109		139	52	103	403	119	153	56	127	455
2nd week	90		96	43	96	325	112	124	51	131	367
3rd week		210		42	125	377	56	99	47	100	255
4th week						*		41	35	106	182
5th week		129		38	56	223					
Sunday Totals	199	339	235	175	380	1328	287	417	189	464	1259
Sunday Averages	100	170	118	445	95	332	96	1045	475	116	315
Blue Holidays		33		10		43		21	14		35
Pageant		225		18	78	321		246	32	102	380
Winter Solstice		305		40	134	479		133	116	140	389
Christmas Eve Candle		173		22	54	249		80	32	46	158
Special Services Total						1092		480	194	288	962
December All Average						303					278
RE						9 & 11a RE					9 & 11a RE
1st week						131					191
2nd week						108					142
3rd week						3					-
4th week						-					-
5th week						3					
Monthly Total						245					333
Average for December						61					167
Combined Average						393					444

No RE 3rd, 5th week; 7 p.m. service only Christmas Eve
 YouTube views recorded 1/15/24 at 2 p.m.

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
6:30-8:00 pm

Members present: Dan Berg, Marc Gorelick, Dick Niemic

Staff present: Jen Crow, Arif Mamdani, Brad Schmidt

Guests present: Will Hegemann

Meeting convened at 6:31 pm

1. Chalice Lighting
2. Minutes from the prior meeting were approved.
3. YTD Financial update. Brad and Jen provided an update on YTD financial performance through November. Highlights includes:
 - a. Revenue remains ahead of budget, largely due to additional gift received at the start of the year. Other income is behind by approx. \$25k
 - b. Expenses are slightly ahead of budget
 - c. Year-end projection remains a deficit of approx. \$200k (vs. budget of \$100k), largely driven by lower revenue
 - d. Updated year-end projection will be available in time for mid-year congregational meeting
 - e. Staff are considering several possible expense reductions for the current year which will be shared with the Board after the updated projections are made
4. Stewardship update. Will Hegeman and Arif provided updates from the Stewardship Committee:
 - a. Letter to raise awareness of current year gap and appeal for increased financial commitments was sent to all members end of 2023 – approx. \$10k additional raised
 - b. Additional plans to increase revenue in current fiscal year include:
 - i. 1:1 meetings with members to generate significant matching gifts
 - ii. “May festival” fundraising event is in the works
 - iii. Combining current year gap closure with annual pledge drive, including targeted information for families with children in RE
 - c. Committee is considering several ideas for increasing revenue over time, including emphasis on legacy giving, greater congregational education about needs and more inspirational messaging, and advance planning for fundraising events
5. Salary ranges. Jen shared information on UUA recommended salary ranges and current staff salaries:
 - a. Several members of the staff remain below UUA recommended minimum
 - b. Equity concerns were raised including lowest-paid members and employees of color are most likely to be below the minimum
 - c. Jen will bring recommendations for 2024-25 salaries to February meeting with a goal of bringing all staff at least to recommended minimum; will take equity into account
6. February meeting, Due to anticipated conflicts, will look for alternative date/time for February meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Marc Gorelick, Treasurer

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Income Statement

Operating Budget

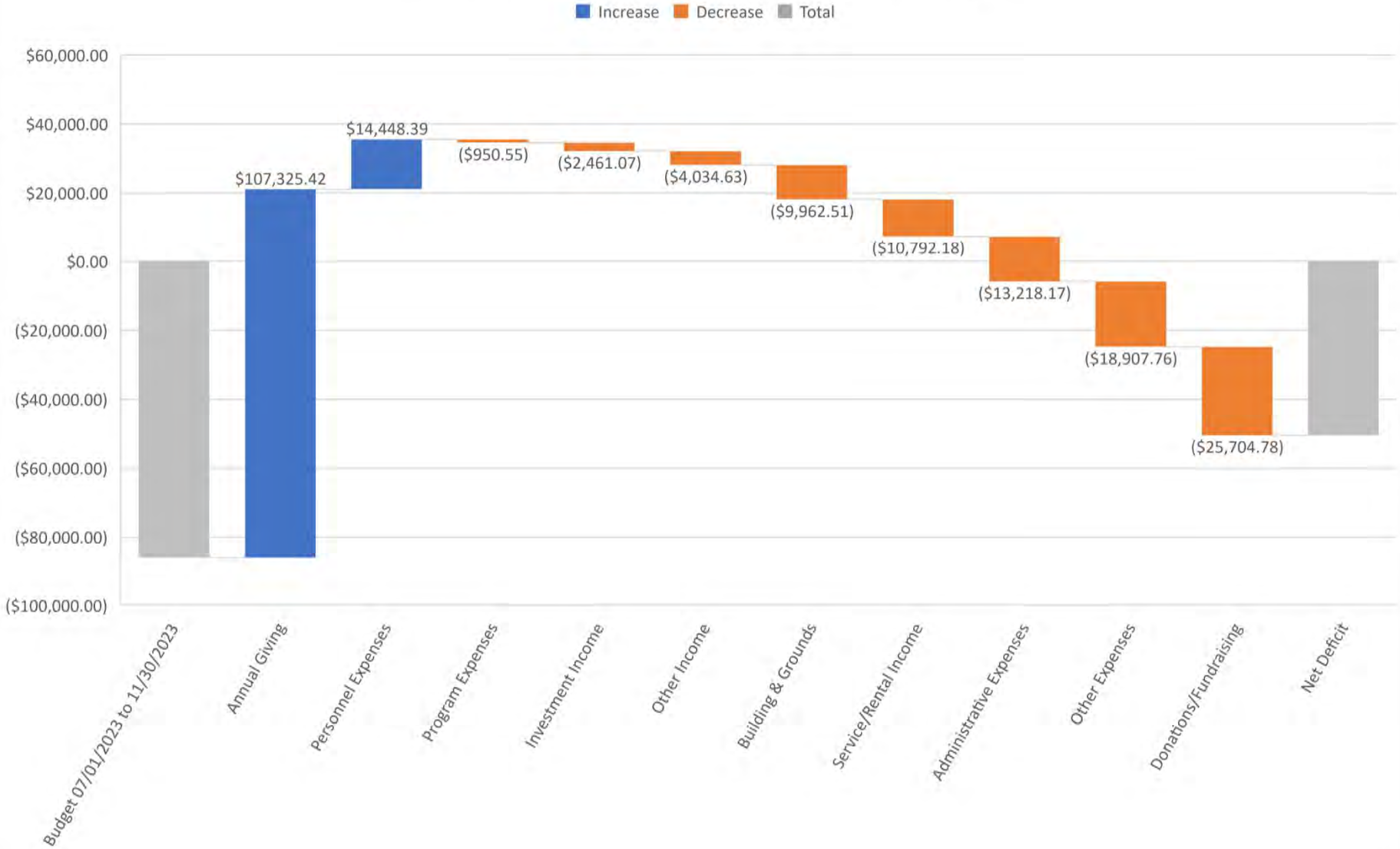
	Actual 07/01/2023 to 11/30/2023	Budget 07/01/2023 to 11/30/2023	Variance	Annual Budget 07/01/2023 to 06/30/2024
Revenues				
Support				
Annual Giving	\$537,907.07	\$430,581.65	\$107,325.42	\$1,049,750.00
Donations/Fundraising	\$54,403.44	\$80,108.22	(\$25,704.78)	\$293,750.00
Total Support	\$592,310.51	\$510,689.87	\$81,620.64	\$1,343,500.00
Earned Revenue				
Service/Rental Income	\$32,124.43	\$42,916.61	(\$10,792.18)	\$103,000.00
Investment Income	\$3.07	\$0.00	\$3.07	\$0.00
Other Income	\$548.68	\$4,583.31	(\$4,034.63)	\$11,000.00
Total Earned Revenue	\$32,676.18	\$47,499.92	(\$14,823.74)	\$114,000.00
Total Revenues	\$624,986.69	\$558,189.79	\$66,796.90	\$1,457,500.00
Expenses				
Personnel Expenses	\$494,282.45	\$508,730.84	\$14,448.39	\$1,205,464.00
Administrative Expenses	\$74,009.62	\$60,791.45	(\$13,218.17)	\$145,900.00
Program Expenses	\$34,283.68	\$33,333.13	(\$950.55)	\$80,000.00
Building & Grounds	\$47,592.36	\$37,629.85	(\$9,962.51)	\$116,800.00
Other Expenses	\$22,866.03	\$3,958.27	(\$18,907.76)	\$9,500.00
Total Expenses	\$673,034.14	\$644,443.54	(\$28,590.60)	\$1,557,664.00
Investment Activity	(\$2,461.07)	\$0.00	(\$2,461.07)	\$0.00
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(\$50,508.52)	(\$86,253.75)	\$35,745.23	(\$100,164.00)

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Balance Sheet

	Actual As of <u>11/30/2023</u>
Assets	
Current Assets	
Cash	\$63,793.75
Investments	\$3,122,597.80
Other Current Assets	\$8,367.66
Total Current Assets	<u>\$3,194,759.21</u>
Non-Current Assets	
Fixed Assets	\$5,676,570.35
Total Non- Current Assets	<u>\$5,676,570.35</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>\$8,871,329.56</u></u>
Liabilities and Fund Balance	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$79,291.20
Benefits Payable	\$38,459.73
Other Current Liabilities	\$16,125.85
Total Current Liabilities	<u>\$133,876.78</u>
Long Term Liabilities	
Loan Payable	\$1,506,385.93
Interfund Transfer	\$0.00
Total Long Term Liabilities	<u>\$1,506,385.93</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>\$1,640,262.71</u>
Fund Balance	
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$4,216,626.96
Donor Restricted Net Assets	\$3,014,439.89
Total Fund Balance	<u>\$7,231,066.85</u>
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	<u><u>\$8,871,329.56</u></u>

2023-2024 Year to Date Net Income Actual vs Budget



Financial Review – November 2023

As of November 2023, expenses exceeded revenues by \$50,509. A reduction of \$32,924 in comparison to October 2023. Annual Giving revenue continues to be favorable to budget by \$107,325 due to the large donations received at the beginning of the year to close the budget gap. Revenue in donations/fundraising, service/rental income, and other income all remain under budget by a total of \$40,532. Expenses are continuing to track near the projected year to date budget in most areas. Variances in expenses are due to timing, or an adjustment in allocation from what was budgeted. Professional fees for the ERC filing, an increase in software subscriptions, and utilities are largely contributing to expenses being over budget by \$28,591. Our assumption for the year is that we are still expecting to receive funding from the employee retention tax credit which will replenish a portion of our depleted reserves from last year. While we operate in a deficit budget, funding will come from other sources in order to support continued operations. At this point in time, there is no change to the year-end deficit projection of \$220,000 that was reported with Q1 financials.

First Universalist leadership team met this week to identify areas where spending can be reduced in the second half of the year.

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Income Statement

Building & Capital Reserve Budget

	Actual 07/01/2023 to 11/30/2023	Budget 07/01/2023 to 11/30/2023	Variance	Annual Budget 07/01/2023 to 06/30/2024
Revenues				
Support				
Donations/Fundraising				
Capital Campaign	\$2,455.00	\$64,791.65	(\$62,336.65)	\$155,500.00
Total Donations/Fundraising	\$2,455.00	\$64,791.65	(\$62,336.65)	\$155,500.00
Total Support	\$2,455.00	\$64,791.65	(\$62,336.65)	\$155,500.00
Total Revenues	\$2,455.00	\$64,791.65	(\$62,336.65)	\$155,500.00
Expenses				
Building & Grounds				
Equipment (Non-Capitalized)	\$186.64	\$208.31	\$21.67	\$500.00
Equipment Repair & Maintenance	\$995.00	\$208.31	(\$786.69)	\$500.00
Repairs & Maintenance	\$439.59	\$3,333.31	\$2,893.72	\$8,000.00
HVAC	\$3,033.00	\$2,500.00	(\$533.00)	\$6,000.00
Elevator	\$1,041.60	\$1,458.31	\$416.71	\$3,500.00
Grounds Maintenance	\$0.00	\$1,666.65	\$1,666.65	\$4,000.00
Capital Campaign Expenditure	\$8,058.90	\$55,416.65	\$47,357.75	\$133,000.00
Interest Expense	\$24,479.08	\$0.00	(\$24,479.08)	\$0.00
Total Building & Grounds	\$38,233.81	\$64,791.54	\$26,557.73	\$155,500.00
Total Expenses	\$38,233.81	\$64,791.54	\$26,557.73	\$155,500.00
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(\$35,778.81)	\$0.11	(\$35,778.92)	\$0.00

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Congregational Mid-year Meeting
January 28, 2024
1:00-2:00 pm
First Universalist Church
Sanctuary & Zoom (multiplatform)

Start	Duration	Topic	Lead
1:00 PM	5	Welcome	Jeff
		<i>Chalice Lighting</i>	
1:05 PM	20	Vote on Jill Braithewaite Ordination	
1:25 PM	10	Work Plan Update	Jen
1:35 PM	10	Finance Committee Report	Marc
1:45 PM	5	Governance Committee Report	Lou
1:50 PM	5	Stewardship Committee Report	Emily
1:55 PM	5	Visionary Goals Update & Plans	Jeff, All
2:00 PM	10	Adjourn	All

Draft visionary goals

1. Honoring the complexity of our Unitarian Universalist faith and embodying its love within our congregation and beyond.
2. Fostering our connection with, care for, and action on behalf of Earth's environment and all of life.
3. Pursuing our individual and collective work for justice, in relationship with those most affected by systems of oppression.
4. Widening the circles of power and engagement with our shared ministry.
5. Providing meaningful presence to one another in times of joy, grief, and change.

Question 1: What is your role within First Universalist?	Question 2: Within the draft Visionary Goals, where do you feel resonance, alignment, or inspiration with your plans, goals, and aspirations within this congregation?	Question 3: Within the draft Visionary Goals, where do you feel a sense of dissonance with your plans, goals, and aspirations within this congregation?	Question 4: In what ways do these draft Visionary Goals invite you to think differently about your role in the congregation? Are there things these goals invite you to consider doing differently? More of? Less of?	Question 5: Are you are open to the possibility of follow-up regarding your feedback on the draft Visionary goals?	Question 5: If you are open to the possibility of being followed up with regarding your feedback on the draft Visionary goals, please provide your name and the best way to contact you.
Member	Goal 5, for sure; goal 1, with a significant addition	More on goal 1: I would add providing opportunities to develop our individual religious beliefs. Because UUism is not a creedal religion, we need to think through our own belief systems, and allow them to evolve. Inward (1) as well as outward (2, 3, and 4).	I'm no longer an active "do'er" but I continue to be supportive of work in all these areas.	Yes	
Member	Embodying love in the congregation and beyond. Resonates. Number five number one resonate. I like pursuing justice in relationship with those most affected.	The language and sentence structure feels complicated. Particularly number two and number three. Can we make them less academic? Maybe remove the kind of funky opening phrases. Overall, I have to work hard to try and figure out what they're saying.	Reading the draft goals doesn't drive me in any particular direction. I think that would take some collective conversation to understand the actual meaning or impact on our church community. I'm also trying to remember what the former goals were and what has shifted or changed from those. So what are we letting go off?	Yes	
Member	All five goals are good. I resonate most to 2 and 4.	My worry is not with the wordings of these goals. My worry comes from the history of how our last visionary goals got interpreted into actions that significantly wounded our community and me personally.		Yes	
Member	Each Sunday we say..."Love is the spirit of this church...and service is its law". I want to see multiple opportunities for members to be of service.		No	Yes	
Member	All five resonate for me, but the first one especially stands out because it forms the basis for the other four.	I am still looking for a goal that reflects the importance of creating community. Perhaps it's implied in #1, but it's not stated and I think it's essential. It's the glue that holds us together, and makes us different than volunteering for the ACLU. It's the foundation from which we work to take care of each other and beyond. Much of the church's work focuses on creating the community (services, church dinners, choir, etc.), so let's state it explicitly. As a side note: The link in Beloved Community (above) takes one to a specific organization's website that doesn't make sense to me. "Beloved Community" means a lot of things to a lot of people, but I thought we embraced some version of MLK's meaning, not necessarily an alignment with a group focused on mindfulness and meditation. Note, I'm all for mindfulness and meditation, but the specific link seems random. We'd be better off without a link.	Goal #1, "Honoring the complexity of our UU faith" certainly makes me think. What is our UU faith? What can I learn from those sacred texts and spiritual practices? Can I build community by studying / practicing with others in our community.	Yes	
Member	Like 1, 2 (especially), 3, 5. Don't know what 4 means.	Where does fostering spiritual growth belong? I think it needs its own visionary goal.		Yes	
Member	2 and 3	4: Would like an explanation of this. 1: Our congregation needs work on this.	I'm missing a statement about personal growth, helping us as individuals grow into beings who embody UU principles.	Yes	
Member	All of them fit with my hopes and aspirations	None	Participating in collective action as part of this community	Yes	

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Member	No 5 Providing meaningful presence to one another in times of joy, grief, and change is something I feel called to think about, and take action. Being the best person I can be, to live out my life using my values and to help others seems to be my goals at this time.	No. 3 Pursuing our individual and collective work for justice, in relationship with those most affected by systems of oppression. I find that interpretation of the goals differs a great deal among the members of our congregation. Agreeing on systems of oppression is not as easy as one might think. And, how to deal with it is even harder. Widening circles of power, when people have different perspectives, is tricky.	It has made me try to understand my own resistance to some changes. Do I have legitimate reasons for resistance, or do I just feel comfortable "the way things were"? I welcome some changes, but not others.	Yes	
Member	Please see next answer	I did not participate in the first round of drafting these goals, because I very much objected to only being allowed to consider one question- therefore molding my answers. I wanted to be able to express my own hopes, aspirations, goals. I felt deeply disrespected as a result.	The process of developing the goals caused me to feel alienated from the church.	Yes	
Member	Fostering our connection to mother earth and our efforts working for justice	Not sure what "widening the circles of power and engagement" actually means	Not necessarily "different" but definitely realizing the value of my presence in guiding and reinforcing friends work for environmental justice.	Yes	
Member	I feel a lot of resonance with goal #2 and goal #5. My own goals and aspirations as a board member and as a human being are to care for and act on behalf of Earth's environment and all of life. And I believe that providing meaningful presence to one another in times of joy, grief, and change is fundamental to belonging to a community that nourishes you.	I do not feel any dissonance with any of these goals.	I think goal #4 is inviting me to participate differently in church, as I think about who has power in our church, how it's used, etc. I think that goal makes me want to think more about power in general, including my own power to influence others.	Yes	
Member	1, 2, 3, 5	I don't understand what #4 means. I would like to see something about personal growth and spiritual development.	I would like to be more involved in changes that happen at church.	Yes	
Member	I resonate with goals 2, 3, and 5, with some reservations about 3 because I think that "those most affected by systems of oppression" is at best redundant with the concept of justice and at worst restricts our "justice" to someone's definition of oppression.	1 and 4 leave me disengaged. I don't feel that Unitarian Universalism is "THE path", but a path. "Circles of power and engagement" sounds very controlling and political.	These goals do not motivate me to do anything differently. I treasure the FirstU congregation as community and will continue to do that. I strongly believe that local action (preferably face-to-face) is more important and rewarding than global gestures. I hope FirstU will expand its involvement with people living within an arbitrary mile of the church.	Yes	

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Friend	2 and 3 most important to me..	4 is too vague, needs context, define "shared ministry"	With this congregation's decades of Social and Environmental Justice endeavors and support, I want to see new people getting involved, supporting these issues. I want to see more support from the leadership on the Chancel EVERY Sunday morning. I would like to see a second chalice lighting each week for a message of hope and healing for whatever is most concerning around us in the local and/or world community. Instead of the ten minute sing-along to start each service I would open the space to hearing from congregants with the simple question..."What is your Joy and/or Concern this week, right now?" I would like to see and hear more about Peace, personal freedoms, world culture and religious traditions exploring the Universal practices so many cultures celebrate. A well thought out Peace Garden would be an open door to our faith's beliefs and would honor/embrace the memory of our elders, believers in the long path of past visions.	Yes	
Member, Former Board member, many committees	# 2, 3, and 5. Number 5 because my own life stage contains opportunities for grief and change as well as joy - this speaks to my own needs. Number 2 and 3 because we need to determine what our next steps are in terms of environmental justice and racial justice and hopefully have a shared vision for what this means and what our strategies and tactics are.	I don't feel dissonance but I would like more understanding of what these mean - although that may not be totally clear at this point. The VGs are such a high level that seems most would agree with them (although I expect many congregants all want to word smith to death). I believe we need more shared understanding of - and input in - not only the high level VG's but the strategies and directions and initiatives implied. I understand (and agree) that the Senior Minister and Team are responsible for developing and implementing the plan. Yet I think misunderstanding happens as various initiatives and directions (decided by Leadership) may be obvious to the Leadership Team and/or Board but not the congregants.	RE # 4: I am not currently in any leadership positions bc of personal issues that have caused me to pull back. I know we are using and exploring different models of leadership - and applaud those efforts - yet it is always a challenge for me to participate in new models of leadership (because I am so very comfortable with traditional models of leadership if they are collaborative and constructive.) So that would be my personal challenge. I know some congregants believe policy governance is not working - I would not want to go back to former models, but believe we can implement policy governance in a much more collaborative way - with more input from congregants and more communication between Leadership, Board, and congregants. RE: Overall - I would expect to be stretched in ways that I do not even understand right now. That is both exciting and scary.	Yes	
Member	in order 1,5,2,3,4 but I support them all	none - they all resonate	IMO - words change, emphasis shifts, but in some form these have all been our intentions for many years now.	Yes	
Member	I like all these and they embody my values in a very good way.	I am 81 years old and spirituality becomes more and more important to me. I do not see it mentioned anywhere in these goals. With the likelihood of death not far off, spiritual growth and spiritual peace are imperative for me. I suggest you make a goal (6) that talks about that aspect of church life. And we do name ourselves a church, after all!	I want to be considered an important part of this congregation, which the addition of something about spirituality would bring to me - a lot.	Yes	

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Member	The 5th resonates the most as the community closest within each of us and then I like how each plays a different role in the concentric circles out from us. I wonder if they could be ordered from widest (2) to most narrow (5): 2-1-3-4-5? I don't know if that is exactly right but there's something there	From my experience at the church I don't really feel our congregations connection to "the earth." I know there is a climate justice effort but it doesn't seem at the forefront in my engagement as a member and parent. So, if it's one of the five then it also needs the intentional support and raising up of the topic more wholly. Or it doesn't need to be there.	I struggle w these being called goals. These are not goals. Guiding principles maybe? Goals you ACHIEVE. These are framed as "we do this by." Very different. And I like that. Just call them what they are then. And then I think a call to have us all use elements of these same principles in our own lives invites us in in need ways.	Yes	
Member			The goals are visionary and therefore each of us can find a connection to each of them. But I don't believe visionary goals contribute to answering questions such as, who are the varieties of people we want filling the pews, what will promote participation by people of many cultures in the work of the church? Writing visionary goals, mission statements are feel good exercises. The hard work is in tackling questions such as those above.	Yes	
Member, Committee member	As a member of the Nominating Committee I see goal 4 significant as we do our work.	I do not find any dissonance.	They call me to embrace the many ways they call us into action on behalf of the greater good.	Yes	
Member, RE Volunteer	I resonate with all of them, but especially with the first one.	No dissonance felt.	As an RE volunteer, I can see how these goals fit within the RE curriculum as a whole.	Yes	
Member	I feel resonance with the following: Goal 1, although I don't believe complexity is the appropriate word - perhaps 'fullness' or 'breadth'. Some core tenants of UU are very simple: love all and all are saved; to me it's not UU's complexity, but its tremendous depth and breadth that should be honored. And Goal 5, which I would also like to see moved up as it appears as an afterthought. I don't believe we can transform the world until we transform ourselves. The internal transformation provides the catalyst and fuel for our work beyond our walls.	I feel dissonance with the following: As presented, the visionary goals are predicated on First U practicing "Beloved Community." I had initially read this as a generic reference, but understand now with the hotlink that it is a specific definition from the Boundless Love Project. I don't believe it's appropriate to embed another organization's work into First U's visionary goals. I also have concerns with Boundless Love's definition of Beloved Community (e.g., its prohibition of factory farming and environmental destruction lack definition and nuance; if you ate beef last week, there's an 85% chance it came from a factory farm that had environmental impacts) and believe it should be broadly shared with the congregation before it is embedded in its visionary goals. And Goal 4. I'm unclear what this goal means and whether it is focused on power external to our congregation or power internal. If it is focused internally I wholly support our shared ministry but believe our congregation has developed governance models adopted through democratic processes that should be respected, i.e., not 'widened' in ways not consistent with them.	Greater participation in Goal 5.	Yes	
Member	Yes	Maybe "deepening and widening and sharing the circles of power within...."	I feel like there is an implicit invitation to deeper engagement throughout the goals - I am drawn to that! Being visionary, they seem abstract - not sure they can be concretized...	Yes	
Member	I appreciate the considerable effort by many participants that has led to these goals. I think they are good. As one who has been mostly absent since before the pandemic, I especially resonate with the importance of goal 5, and I plan to be more present.	We miss the home grown musical groups that were all eventually canceled (I think by Ruth and Justin). We were not part of the choir controversy and are neutral on that emotional saga. But music is a part of the spiritual, engaging part of the service. I'll be hoping to see more participation by members and attendees in the musical program going forward.	Showing up. Rejoining the community (or deciding to leave), versus our current half-in status.	Yes	

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Member	#2 and #3. I like that action on Earth's environment is mentioned.	I don't understand #4, and what it implies. What are "circles of power"?	#2 and #3 imply some collective action by the church, though I don't know what yet		
Member	Nowhere	Too nebulous	It reinforces my decision to move on to a community that resonates more clearly for me and feels more grounded in reality.		I endorse the right and will of the congregation to determine its future and mission/vision for being in community. My input would not be welcome or helpful in that process.
Member	All these sound great	Not really anywhere	I'm going to take this opportunity to say perhaps off topic just how marvelous worship services have become lately. I think the work the church has done on embodied worship is really paying off. Clearly Dr Rideout is a huge part of this but I'm sure also many others. I am so glad we are rarely reaching for hymnals and instead singing with joy and sometimes grief together. It feels so good. So necessary. So much a part of being a church. I've gone from feeling half alienated by the services (liked mostly what was SAID, cringed a lot of what was sung and done) to craving singing in service together. So thanks. Please do anything you can to retain Dr Rideout.		
Member	These are all important, but 2 is especially important as I lately wonder if we will, in fact, do what is necessary for humanity to survive	4: I like the goal, but have not seen much meaningful shared ministry lately. We tend to fall back on command-and-control hierarchical constructs that are part of the traditional paternalistic structure of Unitarian institutions. (Compare with Quaker institutions.) Thus has always been a temptation, but is especially bad post-COVID	I think they are good, inspiring goals and hope we will live into them		
Member	I think these 5 as a whole represent where we want to go.	I think my biggest problem or dissonance with the goals is the order. I think that numbers two and three should be switched. I think that the individual and collective work for justice has to come before the connection and action on behalf of Earth's environment. Not that either is more important. However, I think that we have to take action on behalf of Earth's environment while centering those affected by systems of oppression. I believe that systemic change in America has many times left behind those already oppressed by the system. We cannot pursue environmental action that doesn't center the experience of those already most vulnerable in the world.			Yes

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Member	2	<p>2-3 - the environment is similarly affected by many of the the same systems of oppression that operate at the human level. Stopping fossil fuels burning and extraction is essential for the survival of the planet in a form that has supported human life for 10000 years. However, the "systems of oppression" prevent that step. "Those most affected by systems of oppression" are also differentially affected by, for example, the fossil fuel industry, including factories and freeways and bus/truck areas placed where the rich are least affected and the poor the most affected. Those same systems of oppression are spreading false information about health and illness, about people of different religions and skin colors. We are (almost all) the victims of systems based on corporate and capitalist greed that (historically and currently) spread lies, keep us from getting to know and love each other, and promote planet and citizen-killing behaviors and laws. 2 and 3 each have myriad facets, but many are just different emphases within the same story. Just as we are part of the interconnected web of life, we find ourselves trapped within the interconnected web of oppression in all domains -- environment, information, economy, race. From a church organizational perspective, there could be sub-areas within the overarching collective work for justice, but we would know that we are united and not divided in the areas we choose to focus on. If we focus from 2 on "all of life", that includes environment, housing, immigration, prisons, and our indigenous brothers and sisters fighting the multiple yokes of oppression.</p> <p>1-4 1 implies that the love being referenced (small l) is from us, rather than being the overarching Love (large L) that accounts for not only our love but creation and all that exists. For me, 4- "widening the circles of power and engagement" is one of the ways of engaging our Unitarian Universalist faith and embodying the Love that can hold us all, through good times and bad. So we could have 3 visions, each with some sub-components depending on church energy: 2-3; 1-4; 5.</p>	<p>I would love to feel that we were not factions but facets of a diamond, together creating more than the sum of our parts, a group that has not right or wrong facets, but only complementary ones. So that when there is apparent discord, there are real attempts at reconciliation, where through coming together in a heart-holding environment, we can get beyond defensiveness and find our connections to unity.</p> <p>As Rumi said: "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there." A previous minister once said in a sermon (the sermon that brought me into the church), "Rumi is our saint." Getting to that field is not easy, but seeing the field, feeling the Love in our own hearts, and holding the hearts of each other, makes it possible.</p> <p>Regarding visionary goal 4 - the congregation has an untapped wealth of talent, experience, expertise, and willingness to engage in this type of heart-based work whenever needed. The circles of power and engagement can definitely be widened to engage us all in the work of the Love.</p>		

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Member, First Universalist Ministry Team or Committee member	I connect with 2, 3, and 4 in relation to justice work. All justice work is closely related and we are called to find justice for all. If we do not center our goals on saving the planet and those most affected by its dying gasps, there will be no people left. This is all JUSTICE WORK. Helping those most in trouble, showing ways of solutions to make life easier, lifting the oppression that out-of-control capitalism has created. The power of the ministry should be asking the congregation and friends what they need help with. Talking to their children about what is going on? Giving their children hope for a future? Helping the children to help others who are more oppressed and affected? Whom in our wide-spread Twin Cities community do they feel compelled to partner with in this time of grief and need for dedication to solutions, so that we can all feel that we are helping Mother Earth. So that we may see a glimmer of hope. Environmental justice is racial justice is economic justice is SOCIAL JUSTICE. When you work on increasing justice anywhere, you are helping justice everywhere.	I see very little mass action of the congregation as a whole. There are groups on the edges that are trying to engage people, but very few become engaged. One of the best solutions for depression and anxiety about climate problems is action. We can all do something and if hundreds of people all do a little, we might inspire thousands of others and have a shot at surviving. These are desperate times and though we, in our bubbles, may not be feeling the effects, we don't have to go far to see those who are. Transparency about how our money is acquired, how it is spent, how the budget is formed? Let the congregation make decisions about what the church priorities are, based on what funds are available. We should be discussing how we will achieve net zero emissions for our building. And in the process, help teach others how to do it. Our church should divest from all fossil fuel, private prisons, arms manufacture, and other investments that do not promote life on earth.	Less discussion and more action. Love in action is helping those in need. Showing them concern and helping with solutions. Telling the truth about our history of colonialism and making reparations every day. To everyone who has been harmed by our unfair systems of white supremacy, greedy capitalism, and economic inequity. Explanations about how we got to where we are as a nation and where we are headed. We can do better. We must do better.		
Member	1,2and5	No dissonance	#3 invites me to learn more and become involved		
Member	I find these visionary goals to be very compelling and engaging.	None of these create dissonance for me.	They provide a tighter focus on what we do as members of this congregation.		
Member	All of them really resonate, but particularly 2	The preface to the visionary goals talks about practicing beloved community among and beyond us. What is missing is how we are building faith within each of us.	My impression is that our justice work as a congregation is largely focused on social/racial justice. These goals might encourage us to lean more fully into environmental justice as well. #4 should invite us to explore our policy governance model and how we can more effectively balance the roles of the staff, board, and congregation		
Member	1	3	1		
Member	#5 - Creating and deepening connections with members of our church.	I believe that there are many opportunities to live out my hopes with these Goals.	Continuing to look for opportunities for me to participate in these goals.		
Friend	#2				
Member	Not feeling the resonance.	What happened to racial justice? #3 seems so vague. Where is being a welcoming congregation? Multigenerational? Not sure what #4 means.	Really, these goals are not specific enough to make me think differently about my role in the congregation. The previous visionary goals were much better and I don't think we had achieved them yet. Having participated in a VG workshop last spring, I don't have confidence that the process worked well enough to warrant changing the existing VGs.		
Member	They all sound GREAT!	Goal #3: I feel dissonance with "systems of oppression". I feel that there is justice work to be done that might not be caused by either a "system" or by "oppression". This gets back to the complexity of issues described in Goal #1.	Learning more about justice and injustice.		
Member	1, 2, 5	4	3		

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Member	Numbers 3 & 5 speak to how I aspire to live my life and be a present member of my communities.	In #4 the idea of "shared ministry" feels evangelical to me, which is something I disagree with and gives me pause.			
Member	I'm in alignment with all the goals except #4, which isn't clear to me. What is meant by the shared ministry?	I don't feel a sense of dissonance with any of the goals except #4, as explained in my previous answer.	It's clear to me from reading these goals that I could/should be much more engaged in activities that support the goals. Unfortunately, my energy level isn't what it used to be.		
Member, Ministry Team or Committee member	3	3 The individual work for justice puts one in a silo and hard to be in relationship with those most affected.	5		
Member	All are good	These are nice words, I wonder how we're going to do it!	No, I'm tired right now		
Member	i think that #3 should be ranked higher than #2. Justice is where my heart is and is the reason i joined this church.	I don't.			
Member	2,3 and 5 - generally although I have some issues with some wording/concepts	3. The part about being in relationship with those most affected by systems of oppression. It is not necessarily the job of oppressed people to spend their time and energy to be in relationship with us, so that we can figure out how not to oppress them. I understand that is it important to do things with people and not for people but the reality is that we are almost all white people and we need to figure out how to dismantle white supremacy (and misogyny, ableism, etc) without burdening others. 1. I don't love the use of the word complexity in the first visionary goal. It seems kind of negative and not a great way to start off the goals. It also doesn't include anything about the history of our Unitarian Universalist faith and learning more about it. I am not an expert, but I'm not sure our faith is all that complex. In some ways, it's pretty simple. I would preferred to honor the history, the intricacies, and the potential of our Unitarian Universalist faith. And yes, I realize you drafted the survey so that people would not wordsmith!	Not really. I know that visionary goals are actually very important for the work of the church but as a member who is no longer on the board, I do not look to these to help me think about my role in the congregation. I just try and go where I can be useful.		
Member	These visionary the goals are all meaningful to me however my feeling of "resonance" with First U has diminished significantly over the last two+ years.	There were events that unfolded over recent years that contribute to my experience of seeing these visionary goals as aspirational and deeply disconnected from "behavior" of church leadership.	I have sustained my membership through an ongoing pledge that I brought to a nominal level as I sort out my relationship with First U. The disconnect between stated values and actions has felt profound - hypocrisy comes to mind - not beloved community.		
Member	all the above	none of the above			
Member	All resonate, but I particularly appreciate the way #3 and #5 are expressed.	No dissonance.	I feel like the goals are in a way more gentle than they may have been in the past. Have to say I appreciate that approach. May even make me more likely to challenge myself and consider doing things differently.		

Request for Ordination

Submitted by Jill Braithwaite to the congregation of First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

January 10, 2024

Dear beloved congregation of First Universalist Church of Minneapolis,

It is with great joy and humility that I write to request, in accordance with the bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the powers it confers to congregations, that this congregation ordain me as a Unitarian Universalist minister.

First Universalist has been my church home for almost exactly 20 years. The first time I attended worship, I sat in the back of the balcony and cried at the recognition that this church offered the kind of belonging and spiritual sustenance for which I had yearned. During my years of regular attendance, I had the joy and honor of serving the community in many ways. These included teaching religious education and being a Coming of Age mentor, being on the Welcome Team and facilitating newcomer classes, and serving on the Strategic Planning Team and on the Board of Trustees. First Universalist is where I first learned about UU worship, faith formation, lay leadership, and governance. It's where I felt the first stirrings of my call to UU ministry.

My ministry is firmly grounded in connection, love, joy, and a reverence for the essential interconnectedness of all beings. I bring to ministry the experience of a 30-year career in book publishing that includes leadership in editorial, product development, marketing, and executive teams. I completed a Master of Divinity degree in December 2022, with a concentration in Unitarian Universalist studies. In seminary, I relished both the intellectual rigor of theological studies and the practical study of vocational skills. My passion for the arts shows up in my preaching and worship leadership skills. In my clinical pastoral education unit as a chaplain intern, I honed my pastoral care skills. And in my year-long, full-time ministerial internship at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Minnetonka, I integrated and practiced all aspects of congregational ministry.

On December 1, 2023, the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee affirmed me in preliminary fellowship. I am currently serving in my first ministry role in a one-year

renewable contract ministry at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth.

As an enthusiastic generalist, an institutionalist, and a warm relationship builder, my call to parish ministry is clear. At a time when UU values are more needed than ever, I hope to serve congregations in shared ministry in the sacred work of building the beloved community both within and beyond our walls.

With deepest gratitude for First Universalist's years of nurture and support, as well as for your consideration of this request,

Jill

Jill Braithwaite

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