

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis  
Stewardship Team



Dear Beloved Community,

We are at the cusp of one of the important moments in our community life. Starting in February is our annual invitation to discover in our hearts how generosity can support and enhance First Universalist's mission and ministry. We are beginning the annual pledge campaign, an opportunity to empower the church with the necessary financial resources. The pledge campaign does so much: supports the work of ministry; provides for and nurtures staff; ensures our beautiful physical home remains a place of joy and refuge.

The legacy of the pandemic is still with us. Some of the habits of church have faded, one of which is asserting through a financial commitment the heart-centered value we place on this wonderful community. If First Universalist is to continue being a home and harbor for those seeking real community, we need to step forward to underwrite the church's financial needs.

Our budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 is \$1.8 million. Annual pledged income is the most significant part of the overall budget at \$1.6 million. As a vibrant, 165-year-old community, we have the capacity to fulfill our dreams and aspirations. Now is the opportunity, through a financial commitment for the coming year, to shape the future we desire.

Every pledge is important. Every pledge, no matter the amount, bears witness to our commitment to make real a world of love and hope.

Enclosed in your pledge packet is information on the church budget and how funds are allocated. There's salary information and how our staff compensation aligns with UUA guidelines. There's a note from our Director of Worship on where we've been and where worship is going. You'll find news on Religious Education and how this wonderful program lays the foundation for the UU community of the future. You'll also find a pledge card that hopefully makes payment choices align with your own financial situation.

We have the opportunity to envision and create the community we seek.  
Let us offer the financial support as we are able to give the church the  
resources needed.

With profound gratitude,

Your Stewardship Committee



Emily Bijagte, Will Hegeman, Janet Merrill, Tom Saterstrom, Velma  
Wagner, Emily Wallace

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis  
Rev. Arif and Rev. Ashley



Dear congregation,

Our faith asserts that each of you is born whole and holy. Each of you is a gift, a treasure of the living world. We are grateful for you and you amaze us. This congregation needs every one of you.

You might be mentally squirming as you read this.

*“That’s kind, but you don’t know  
ME.”*

*“What ministerial  
naivete/hogwash/platitude  
silliness.”*

To be honest, we feel a little squirmy saying it. It isn’t often that we’re so direct, so earnest, and so vulnerable about our care and our need. Our brains are suspicious, soaked in the market economy culture in which worth is assigned rather than innate.

You don’t have to believe us when we say that each of you is a gift. We need not think alike, to love alike! What matters is what we **do**. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer asks “Even in a market economy, can we behave “as if” the living world were a gift?

So what happens if you accept her invitation? What happens if you live...

*“as if” you are a gift  
of the living world?*

*as if our collective  
well being depends  
on you?*

*as if you are truly  
amazing?*

This stewardship season we invite you to live this; to live what Kimmerer calls the “gift economy.” Our beloved community exists because you are a living gift **and** because of your financial gifts.

It is not an easy balance for any of us, being both. In comparing the stories of the market economy and that of the gift economy, Robin Wall Kimmerer writes,

“One of these stories opens the way to living in gratitude and amazement at the richness and generosity of the world. One of these stories asks us to bestow our own gifts in kind, to celebrate our kinship with the world. We can choose. If all the world is a commodity, how poor we grow. When all the world is a gift in motion, how wealthy we become.”

Let us choose to live our gratitude and generosity. Let us choose kinship. Let us live the abundance possible when we make gifts of ourselves and gifts of those resources that come from the earth but live in our bank accounts.

This congregation needs each of you. Each of you is a gift, a treasure of the living world. We are grateful for you and you amaze us.

This is our truth. May we live and give “as if” it were true too.

With Love,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature, on the left, is 'Arif Mandir' written in a cursive style. The second signature, on the right, is 'Ashley' also in a cursive style. The signatures are placed on a light yellow rectangular background.

Rev. Arif and Rev. Ashley

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis  
Worship Arts Ministries



Looking back on the worship year since last July, we find a vibrant blend of growth, unity, and creativity. Standout moments like the Art & Soul worship series have deepened our exploration of spirituality and creativity. The reintroduction of worship associates has woven new voices and perspectives into our shared spiritual journey.

The strengthening melody of our congregation singing together has been a heartening testament to our deepening connection. This unity is mirrored in the congregation's growing worship attendance (a trend that was particularly palpable during our holiday services) and a deepening sense of congregational engagement and leadership in our services.

Looking ahead, we're excited to see the fruits of last year's music ministry listening sessions. First Universalist's choral program will very soon sing again, adding another layer to our communal worship experience. And remember, whether it's been weeks, months, or even longer since you last joined us in worship, there's always a space for you in our pews. Our collective mosaic is enriched by each presence, and every voice adds to our harmonious hum.

In harmony; in peace,

Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout  
Director of Worship Arts

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis  
Children, Youth, and Family Ministries



Dear First Universalist Church,

I am now almost five months into my role as Interim Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries, and I have to let you know how proud I am of our programming for kids and families.

**I am proud of the breadth and scope of our program.** As you know, I inherited a robust and thriving program for our children, youth, and families. Our program currently includes over 225 registered families with over 345 registered children and youth, making our program one of the largest in the country.

**I am proud of what we have accomplished this year.** Since September, we have offered diverse and accessible programming for our children, youth, and families spanning topics, age, and schedules.

- We offer **childcare** for children in preK and younger
- We offer **Religious Education** for Kindergarten through ninth grade, and our Senior High Youth Group for youth in grades 10-12.
- Our programs include several hallmark programs: **Neighboring Faiths** for our 7th graders, who learn about ethical and informed interreligious engagement in the classroom and on site visits to other faith communities
- **Coming of Age** for our 9th graders, who spend the year growing in understanding of our collective and their personal spiritualities before presenting spiritual statements to the congregation in May
- and **Our Whole Lives** comprehensive sexuality education for grades 1, 5, 8, and 12

**But our programming does not begin and end on Sunday mornings!**

We have also begun offering Saturday Sprouts, a new opportunity for parent peer support, family worship, and child faith formation. We initially planned to offer Saturday Sprouts seasonally, but after an overwhelmingly positive response from families and requests for higher frequency, this semester we are offering Saturday Sprouts on a monthly basis.

**This year, we have also taken steps to expand the leadership of our Children, Youth, and Families program.** We began a Children, Youth, & Families Advisory Team of parents, volunteers, and members to develop and support an overarching vision for our program. We started a Youth Leadership Team, which invites 10th-12th grade youth into the decision making processes for our youth and adult programming at church, including youth who have a rotating role on our church Board. We have provided new levels of professional development and ongoing support for our Youth and Young Adults (YAYAs) who teach and provide childcare in our Religious Education and childcare programs.

We do not charge a fee for participation in our Children, Youth, and Families programming, just as we do not charge a fee for participating in worship or receiving pastoral care. However, that does not mean this programming is free. **Running our Children, Youth, and Families program costs approximately \$40 per child per week.**

I am asking you, a member or friend of First Universalist Church, to consider both the cost and the blessing of our Children, Youth, and Families program as you consider your financial commitment to the ministry of our intergenerational congregation.

With care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Connelly-Vetter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allison Connelly-Vetter

Interim Director of Children, Youth, and Families Ministries

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis  
Religious Education: Our Whole Lives



As I write this, I am currently at an Our Whole Lives (OWL) training for trainers where I have been approved to train OWL facilitators throughout the US and Canada. I am surrounded by genius, generous people striving to create a world of shared power and responsibility. And I ask you all now, why is OWL ministry?

We currently have 25 registered 1st grade OWL participants, 15 registered 5th grade OWL participants (with likely more to register!), 29 8th grade OWL participants, 8 senior high OWL participants, and have grown our adult OWL programming with each session offered. Y'all this is impactful, religious work spreading the truth and values we hold dearly throughout our communities and beyond.

We can turn to the shared stories of our OWL graduates going out into the world and reporting back, "Claire! I had to tell my college roommate she couldn't get pregnant just by laying down next to someone in bed!" Or, "Yeah, Claire, we knew we had to do something and get this person home safe because they were too intoxicated to consent." And, "No. Dude. Remember, we can't assume anyone's gender just by the clothes they wear." These are the tangible reasons we invest and financially support our OWL program. Not only for the benefit of our youth, but the benefit of the youth with whom our OWL graduates join in community with.

However, this life saving, life changing work is not free. We often operate in a belief of abundance that First Universalist will provide for all. And we do want to provide for all. Each OWL facilitator goes through a 20-24 hour training that costs approximately \$350 per facilitator. Snacks for our middle and senior high youth are approximately \$500 per year. We host a couple of overnights for our OWL-lets and each overnight costs approximately \$600 in food and supplies. We host a couple of panels and bring outside guests into our space. We offer honoraria, and spend approximately \$300



per year on honorariums. And then of course there is your friendly OWL program coordinator (me!). I communicate with facilitators and families, plan, organize, supervise, and prepare all classes. This really allows our facilitators to focus on facilitating and not the administration and organization, which allows for longevity and continuity of our amazing facilitators. All of this important work is 100% funded by the generosity of our church community (that's you!).

As I sit here writing this at my training, I'm reflecting on a less tangible reason for OWL ministry, and that's how OWL is the beautiful embodiment of the physical body and the metaphysical soul. OWL teaches us how to be in a relationship not only with others but also (or even more importantly) in relationship with ourselves.

OWL participants (our OWL-lets), OWL facilitators, and OWL trainers, are ultimately the generational breakers and interrupters not only for our families, but for so many future OWL-let families. Please join me in becoming an OWL financial supporter and helping us to financially provide this great, powerful, important ministry of changing how we relate and treat each other and ourselves.

OWL be with you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Claire Tralle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Claire Tralle  
Member and OWL Program Coordinator

## 2024-2025 Budget: \$1.6 Million Annual Giving Goal\*

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis has a 160+ year history of being a strong and powerful voice for liberal religion and social justice in Minneapolis and beyond. We sway to the Universalist side of Unitarian Universalism, which means that we're rooted in an ethic of love with a wide embrace. On any given Sunday, you'll find 200-300 of us worshipping in the sanctuary and online, while creating radically inclusive community in our religious education classes that welcome more than 300 children and youth.

### Planned budget breakdown by program area:

- **Religious Education**

We're growing holistic family support (Saturday Sprouts) while evolving our RE program to meet today's kids' needs with two new advisory teams and our signature programs.

- **Worship**

We continue rebuilding the habit of church and learning to sing together after years apart. Looking forward, a choir is in our near future.

- **Pastoral Care**

We offer care to each other in times of joy and loss, celebration, and heartbreak. Members care for members through meals, rides, small groups and caring companionship.

- **Programs & Events**

Community is returning to the building. Over 130 people participated in January's Congregational Retreat. Community dinners see over 100 people in our Social Hall each month.

- **Communications**

A new website is in process to bring our online ministry into the next chapter of growth.

- **Finance & Fundraising**

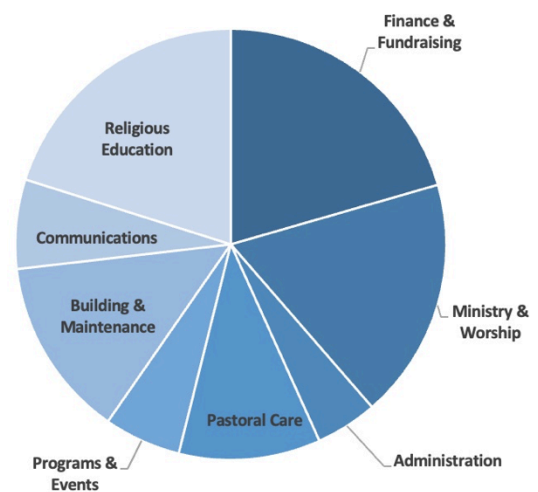
Lay led teams focusing on finance and fundraising exist again with robust sustainability plans. A new integrative database is rolling out in the coming weeks.

- **Administration**

We continue to innovate models of ministry, staffing and organizational development needed for a late-COVID world.

- **Building & Maintenance**

More and more classes, groups, and outside organizations rely on our building for meeting space and the hospitality they know and trust.



## **Salary alignment to UUA Guidelines and bringing support staff back to FTE status:**

The congregation's commitment to bring all staff into alignment with the increasing UUA guidelines continues. Our goals for this year are to 1) reinstate hours and benefits for facilities staff who incurred cuts last year, 2) Bring all staff below UUA guidelines into alignment with suggested minimums, prioritizing our lowest paid staff (\$31,340), and 3) Increasing staffing to provide much needed administrative support across all our programs.

\* Please note that the staff, Finance Team, and board are developing and refining the budget even as the Annual Giving Campaign proceeds. A draft budget will be prepared in late spring for presentation to the congregation that aligns our hopes and dreams with our revenue.



# 2024–2025 First Universalist Giving Pledge (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We wish to contribute:  Monthly  Every 2 weeks  Weekly  Annually

In the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per occurrence for a Total Annual Contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Starting: \_\_\_\_\_

Method:  Credit Card or Bank Account  Cash/Check  Stock (email [jie@firstuniv.org](mailto:jie@firstuniv.org))  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you selected Credit Card or Bank Account, please fill in the applicable section below.

This is a:  One-time gift  Please set up recurring gifts (automatically renew each year)

Cover processing fees?  I would like to cover any processing fees to ensure First U gets my full donation  No

### Bank Account

Please debit my gift from my:

Savings Account

Checking Account

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Routing Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing address (if different):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I authorize First Universalist Church to process debit entries to my account on or after July 1, 2024. If I checked recurring payments above, I understand this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization.

Authorized Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

### Credit Card

Please charge my gift to my:

Visa

MasterCard

American Express

Discover Card

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

CVC Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing address (if different):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I authorize First Universalist Church to charge my credit card on or after July 1, 2024. If I checked recurring payments above, I understand that this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to my support of this annual budget, please contact me separately about other giving options:

Sponsorship of Religious Education

Employer Matching options

Capital Campaign

Heritage Circle

Volunteering my time and abilities (Volunteer hub coming soon – let me know when it’s available!)

Contact Jie Wronski-Riley at [jie@firstuniv.org](mailto:jie@firstuniv.org) with questions.

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